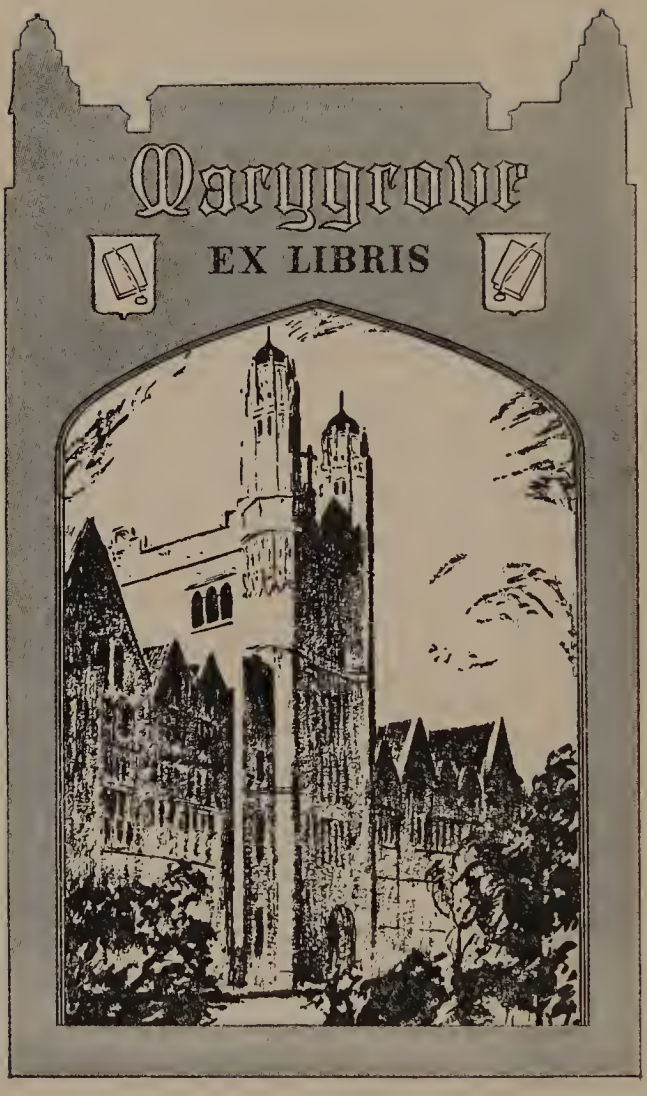
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IN BROWN UNIVERSITY

1927

MYSTIC ITALY

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I. "Indian" Bacchus and Eleusinian Jacchos. *Red-figured vase found in Northern Italy (Val di Trebbia).* BOLOGNA.

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Mystic Italy

by

Michael I. Rostovtzeff

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TO THE MEMORY

OF

W. AMELUNG

THE Colver lectureship is provided by a fund of $10,000 presented to Brown University by Mr. and Mrs. Jesse L. Rosenberger of Chicago in memory of Mrs. Rosenberger's father, Charles K. Colver of the class of 1842. The following sentences from the letter accompanying the gift explain the purposes of the foundation:—

"It is desired that, so far as possible, for these lectures only subjects of particular importance and lecturers eminent in scholarship or of other marked qualifications shall be chosen. It is desired that the lectures shall be distinctive and valuable contributions to human knowledge, known for their quality rather than their number. Income, or portions of income, not used for lectures may be used for the publication of any of the lectures deemed desirable to be so published."

Charles Kendrick Colver (1821–1896) was a graduate of Brown University of the class of 1842. The necrologist of the University wrote of him: "He was distinguished for his broad and accurate scholarship, his unswerving personal integrity, championship of truth, and obedience to God in his daily life. He was severely simple and unworldly in character."

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PREFACE

The three chapters of this little book represent in a somewhat modified and enlarged form the three lectures which I gave as the Colver Lectures at Brown University in the spring of 1927. I have dealt with the subject discussed in these lectures previously. The outlines of chapters I and III were delivered as public lectures in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1924, and chapter I was printed in "The Living Church", September, 1925.

I have given to the book the somewhat pretentious title "Mystic Italy". The title, like almost all titles, does not correspond exactly to the contents of the book. My aim is not to give a general picture of the mystic tendencies which prevailed in Italy in the ancient times—such a task can not yet be performed adequately, since our information for some parts of Italy and for some periods is very scanty, for other times and places totally wanting. It is to present an analysis of certain monuments of Pompeii and of Rome which reflect mystic tendencies in the population of these two places during the early Roman Empire. In giving this analysis

I have avoided learned discussions and controversies. I have given my own views, mentioning the opinions of my colleagues when I agreed with them, but only rarely when I disagreed. I know that this method is open to criticism, which I accept in advance. My book must be regarded as an essay, not as a learned monograph.

Since the book deals with monuments of art (pictures, reliefs in stucco or in stone, and the like) it had to be generously illustrated. I should have been glad to provide still more ample illustrations, and have refrained from doing so, not because of the lack of interesting and little known monuments, but because it would have made the little book too expensive and imposed too heavy a burden on my editor and my readers.

The few notes appended to the book are not meant to provide a full bibliography of the subject or to cite all the sources which I have used. As regards modern books I have referred to those which will be of the greatest assistance to the reader if he wishes to go deeper into the subject, and those in which the monuments dealt with in this essay are published in full or the literary, epigraphical and archaeological evidences quoted and discussed more extensively than was possible to me. As regards the ancient sources I have quoted those only

which are little known and not quoted in the books and articles mentioned in my bibliography.

For the map of the *cryptoporticus* of the "Homeric" house and the photographs of the mystic *triclinium* of this house and of its pictures I am indebted to the kindness of Professor A. Maiuri, Superintendent of Excavations in Campania and Director of the Museum of Naples. Without his help, the help of his assistant Professor P. Mingazzini, and that of Professor M. Della Corte, Inspector of Excavations at Pompeii, I should not have been able to study at leisure and with care the monuments of Pompeii both at Pompeii and in my own home. For permission to publish this material, which is still unpublished and is to be brought out in the forthcoming book of Professor V. Spinazzola on his excavations in the *strada dell'Abbondanza* of Pompeii I am indebted to the courtesy and scientific spirit of Professor Colasanti, Director of the Archaeological Service of Italy and of Professor R. Paribeni, Superintendent of Excavations in Rome and Director of the *Museo Nazionale delle Terme Diocleziane*. I beg all these gentlemen to accept my most sincere thanks.

It was easier to illustrate the chapter dealing with Rome, since almost all the monuments dis-

cussed there have been published repeatedly. Yet even there it would have been impossible to illustrate so amply from excellent photographs except for the kindness of Professor R. Paribeni.

The subject of my book is arduous and every point in it controversial. All depends on the interpretation of archaeological monuments. Those only who have dealt professionally with archaeological monuments and their interpretation know how difficult a task this is, especially the interpretation of monuments which illustrate religious ideas and rites. It is very easy to see too much in the monuments or to see too little, to catch the details and to miss the essential points or vice versa. Symbols, especially mystic symbols, are difficult to understand and one may be inclined to see a symbol or a mystic rite where there is none.

In going over the manuscript of my book last summer in Rome I was able to discuss my interpretations of the monuments with a master of archaeological interpretation, Professor W. Amelung, Director of the German Archaeological Institute, whose recent untimely death was a great and unexpected blow to all his friends, to the German Institute and to the study of ancient art and archaeology. His sharp criticism has helped me to modify some of my views and to formulate some

of them with more precision. I am sorry that I can not now express my warmest thanks to my late friend personally but must send them through the *aether* to his immortal *Manes*.

The first two chapters of my book were read in manuscript by my dear friend Professor F. Cumont, the greatest living authority on the history of ancient religions. The remarks and suggestions he had the great kindness to make have all been incorporated into the text of my book. I beg him to accept my best thanks for his help.

My English has been retouched and many important suggestions made by Professor Austin M. Harmon, my friend and colleague, to whom I am very grateful for his collaboration.

M. I. R.

New Haven, Conn.
January, 1928.

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MYSTIC ITALY

CHAPTER I

MYSTIC ITALY

I. Introductory remarks. Reason versus religion in the ancient world.

There has been no time except our own when men were as proud of their achievements and as confident in the almighty force of their reason as during the full bloom of Greek civilization, the time after the Persian wars and before the conquest of Greece by the Romans, the so-called Classical and early Hellenistic period—the Fourth, the Third and the Second Centuries B. C. Scientific research stood at its height, academies and museums carried out systematic experimental work in their laboratories and studies, and the philosophers were ready and waiting to take up the achievements of exact science and to incorporate them into their general theories, based on logic and the theory of knowledge and almost completely free from any religious and mystic admixture.

The outlook of mankind became ever wider. Educated men were no longer confined to the Mediterranean in their speculations about the inhabited earth. After Alexander they learned from their Oriental teachers, the Persians, much about India, China, and Central Asia, and enlarged this knowledge by means of military expeditions and extensive travels. They became acquainted not only with the Mediterranean and the Black Sea but had also a rather vague notion of the two oceans—the Pacific and the Atlantic, the latter no more the exclusive field of Phoenician commerce. In their historical investigations they used all the refinements of modern historical research, including the comparative and sociological methods, and many a one attempted to write world history and the history of human civilization both from the historical and the philosophical point of view. History, political science, sociology, philosophy, were put to practical use for the improvement of the conditions of human life, and the most far reaching experiments from different points of view, including the socialistic and the communistic, were suggested for the creation of an ideal state and an ideal community.

Religion and a religious conception of life were regarded as old-fashioned and reactionary. Reli-

gion, of course, remained a constituent part of state life, a kind of traditional part of the state machinery, retained for the benefit of the illiterate and uneducated classes. The intellectual were guided in their conception of life, morals, and politics, not by religion, but by philosophical theories, some of which were deistic, but all of which viewed the various existent religious creeds, especially the religion of the leading nations—the Greeks and the Italians—as mere superstition.

Reason and science seemed definitely to have conquered religion. While the atomists and after them Epicurus and Lucretius still combated with all their energy the old-fashioned and reactionary religious conception of life, the refined, utterly modern Cicero, in the early period of his life, with his vague deistic outlook, contemptuously smiled at the superstitions of the masses, and regarded the state religion of Rome as an instrument of domination of the ruling classes. I imagine that the highly educated Ptolemies and Seleucids, the rulers of Egypt and Syria in the Hellenistic period, had the same Ciceronian smile, when they saw themselves pictured on the walls of the sanctuaries of Babylon and Memphis parading in the uniform of Babylonian and Egyptian kings who were sons of the gods and gods themselves (or the

great anointed of the gods), or when they organized cults of their own as Savior Gods and Benefactor Gods, reincarnations of Apollo, Herakles, or Dionysus, for the benefit of the populace of their huge new capitals and of the new cities, only half Greek, throughout their great empires. "Instruments of domination", "good for the Oriental peasant and the Greek proletarians", thought these sovereigns surrounded in their brilliant capitals by their friends, the great scholars and philosophers of the Alexandrian Academy and the University of Antioch, for whom gods were mere beautiful creations of fancy, which they themselves could turn to good account in their elegant poetry.

And yet religion was not dead; it was too early to organize its pompous funeral. The large masses of the population of the leading Greek cities of the Fifth and Fourth Centuries—Athens, Corinth, Tarentum, Syracuse—those of the capitals of the Hellenistic empires—Alexandria, Antioch, Pergamon—those of the city of Rome—capital of the growing Roman world state, and the millions of the rural population jealously kept their age-old religious beliefs, and listened with open minds to the "revelations" which, one after another, came both from the Thracian North and from the mystic Orient. Along with the ancient tales of the na-

tional gods of Greece and Italy, with the old-fashioned Olympian religion of Homer and the venerable mysteries of Eleusis, remodelled by the lofty personality of the great religious reformer who took the mythical name of Orpheus, the souls of the men and women who filled the huge cities and the teeming country were ready to absorb the new teachings of the Thracian, Anatolian, Syrian, Palestinian, Egyptian, and Persian priests, all bearers of great mysteries which promised to save the initiated in this world and the next. The more skeptical and rationalistic the higher classes grew, the deeper and more firmly rooted became the religiosity of the masses, especially in the villages and the farms and in the slums, among the slaves and the wage earners of the growing factories. Hard life, hard work, meager prospects for the future, oppression from above—such was the lot of millions of peasants and of hundreds of thousands of workmen. No wonder that they sought refuge with the gods, and hoped, firmly hoped, to fare better after the end of their dull human career on the earth, in the after life, in the mysterious other world. And the priests of the mystic cults had much to say of this better world, opening wonderful prospects to the craving souls of peasants and workmen.

Meanwhile the glorious advance of science and learning suddenly and unexpectedly stopped. The last great achievements of science and philosophy belong to the Second Century B. C. With the First Century begins a rapid decline. What was the reason of it?

It is not the place here to take up this problem. Whatever the reasons may have been—the collapse of the great Hellenistic monarchies under the pressure of Rome and the ruin of the flourishing Greek cities under the Roman domination, the exhausting wars, the repeated cruel and bloody social revolutions, the general misery of the times, and the growing oppression of both rich and poor in the Hellenistic East—the fact of the sudden bankruptcy of science and learning is beyond doubt. The great impulse of the glorious times of the Greek city states was gone and gone forever. The fact as such was immediately felt by the leading spirits of the time and produced a tremendous depression. The limitations, nay the impotence, of human brains when confronted with the most vital questions were bitterly felt.

The feeling created, on one hand, the sterile skepticism of some philosophical schools, especially the Platonic Academy, and on the other a tendency to take refuge in the depth of mystic speculation,

in astrological determinism, and in the magic practices of spiritualism. A brilliant example of a man who tried to combine in his philosophy both the results of exact science and the powerful spell of mysticism is presented by the last great creative mind of the Hellenistic period—Posidonius, a great scholar of the type of Aristotle, but at the same time the first promoter of a mysticophilosophical conception of life, the first "scientific" spiritualist of the world.

Such was the situation in the Orient, in the age-old Greek city states and in the brand-new capitals of the ancient Oriental monarchies.

The Orient, however, was now a slave of the new Western power, the glorious Republic of Rome, head of the Italian federation and mistress of a huge provincial Empire which included all the ancient centers of civilized life, both in the East and in the West. Nobody speaks now of Rome and Italy as a land of parvenus who paraded in the brilliant feathers of a foreign civilization. We know better now. We know that Italy originated a new phase in the development of ancient civilization, a new aspect of Hellenistic culture. Latin literature, Latin art, Latin law, Latin statecraft, contained new elements and brought real progress in the history of civilization.

However great these achievements were, in one field Rome was and remained almost sterile—in the domain of science and learning. A newcomer, a new guest at the gorgeous festival of science and learning, Rome eagerly absorbed the great achievements of Greek positive knowledge; but in adapting them as far as possible to the requirements and the peculiarities of her own life she ruthlessly destroyed the foundations of pure science and research laid by the Hellenistic scholars. The death of Archimedes at the siege of Syracuse is an eloquent symbol of the Roman attitude towards the research of the Hellenistic period. Lucretius, to be sure, with the fervor of a new worshipper of the materialistic conception of life extolled in beautiful verse the great work of Epicurus and praised the great liberator of mankind from the chains of superstition. However, science and learning never experienced a renascence in Rome. Good and faithful pupils, the Romans never became creative in science and philosophy, and acquiesced in what had been done by the Greeks. The only exception was in the field of applied science, where the theoretical knowledge of the Greeks was utilized by practical men in new technical devices, especially in engineering.

In the field of religion the Roman conservatives

clung to the primitive religious beliefs of the Roman and Italian peasants which, by gradual import of foreign cults—Etruscan, Greek and Oriental—became, to a certain extent, modified and modernized. The liberals, on the other hand, the devotees of Greek science, boldly repudiated all religions, and became more atheistic and more skeptical than even their Greek teachers. Both religion and atheism, however, but for the deeply rooted domestic and family cults of the middle class and the peasants, remained superficial, and did not penetrate very deeply into the souls and intellects of the great practical men who conquered the civilized world.

Meanwhile heavy clouds gathered on the horizon of the Roman Republic. Important social, economic, and political questions led some of the leaders of the Roman state into the path of revolution, and gradually revolution became the outstanding feature of Roman political life, degenerating into an ever renewed civil war, a war of armed proletarians against the domination of the senatorial class. Adventurous and ambitious members of the ruling class led the armed proletariat in this bitter fight, a fight which was exploited by the leaders to the end that the Roman Republic might give place to a military tyranny, the rule of one

man based on the support of a well trained and well paid army.

This tremendous crisis in the life of the civilized world endured for almost eighty years. Thousands of evils descended upon the population of the Roman Empire. Regular wars, cruel and bloody as civil wars always are; murders and proscriptions of the vanquished political party, which affected the best and the most active men; heavy taxation of the population all over the Empire; compulsory conscription of soldiers by the leaders of the civil strife; pillage of the provinces, especially of the East, in times of war, and a selfish, utterly rotten administration, based on force and compulsion, in the short periods of peace; sweeping confiscations of land and other property; renewed redistributions of land in Italy; mass emigration of thousands and thousands of peaceful citizens—these were the outstanding features of that miserable time.

No one felt secure of his future and the future of his nearest and dearest. Ruin, misery, death, threatened everybody at every moment. What use to toil and to suffer, to build up a home and a family, when a new political and social convulsion might at any time annihilate the toiler with his family and his property?

Moral standards were low and became ever lower. One could not trust one's wife, one's children, one's servants. Tomorrow they would betray one and ask from the masters of the moment the due reward for one's head. The greatest sufferers were, of course, those who had something to lose; the members of the ruling classes, the city bourgeoisie, the peaceful peasants. It was a blessed time for the ambitious adventurers, for the greedy profiteers, for the soldiers of fortune. Even these, however, felt that tomorrow might bring them, the masters, ruin and death.

Under such conditions some revelled in the lowest materialism and lived on the principle: "Enjoy the present, never mind the future"; others, the best, the most intelligent, who saw the human brute triumphant and human reason helpless, lost almost all confidence in the human intellect, and appealed to higher and more mysterious forces. "Life on earth is a perpetual torture; let us hope that there is another life where the good will not be victims of the worst, where virtue, morals, faith, will triumph over vice, depravation, and atheism". To these sufferers neither science nor the ruling philosophical schools offered any consolation. Science and the Epicurean materialism taught that the human soul, itself material, would be dissolved

with the body—that death is the real and final end of human life. The Stoics entertained only vague and very abstract ideas about a future life. The Academy persisted in its agnosticism and skepticism. There was no help from these sources.

There was no help, either, from the state religion. The Roman religion was too primitive and too childish for the high intellects of educated men, and gave no answer to the question of what awaits man after his body becomes cold and motionless. The Etruscan teaching, with all the horrors of its nether world, was forgotten, except by a few antiquarians. The lofty Olympians cared for the living alone, and let the dead drag an obscure and listless life in the depths of earth. Greek religion spoke, of course, vaguely of the dim Elysian fields and of the mythical islands of the blessed; such an indistinct conception, however, was not capable of satisfying the troubled souls of the men of the First Century.

It is not, therefore, surprising that many of the intellectuals and great numbers among the lower classes turned their back to science, philosophy, and official religion, and sought consolation elsewhere. There was no lack of philosophical and religious teachings adapted to satisfy the mystic aspirations of men. For the highest intellects there was the

Stoic philosophy as remodelled by Posidonius, reconciling science and religion. Those who found this teaching too rationalistic went in masses to listen to the mystic revelations of the New-Pythagoreans, who compounded for them a quasi-scientific mixture of Pythagorean Platonism with some elements of spiritualism and Orphism.

This following was not opposed to the existing religions, but tried to interpret them in an allegoric and mystic sense. They concerned themselves greatly, these New-Pythagoreans, with life after death. They promised to their adepts a glorious eternal life in the pure and luminous sphere above the earth, "enjoying the contemplation of the luminous gods, and listening in rapture to the ravishing harmony of the spheres, that divine melody of which earthly music is but a feeble echo" (F. Cumont). Too lofty for the multitude, New-Pythagoreanism found many adepts among the higher Roman aristocracy.

The average intellectuals, however, wished more digestible food, and found it in the Greek mysteries—those of Eleusis with their reformed Elysian fields, their last judgment, and their eternal banquet of the blessed, and those of the Dionysiac or Bacchic *speirai* or *thiasoi* with a wilder and more orgiastic ritual. Both the Eleusinian and the

Dionysiac mysteries were deeply affected by Orphism and were full of impressive ceremonies, the most impressive those of initiation.

On a still lower level stood the various Oriental cults, each of which assured to the initiated in one form or another a future life free of the evils and the tortures of life on earth. The half-Orphic cult of the Thracian Sabazios, the ecstatic cult of the Great Mother, the priests of Isis with their impressive ritual, the Syrians and Persians with their lofty solar teachings, connected with deep moral ideas, were all ready to draw the veil of their utterly Hellenized mysteries to everybody who wanted to be saved. And behind them came the abstruse teaching of Hermetism and of other branches of the mystic gnosis, steadily developing spiritualism, and the quasi-scientific deterministic astrology.

The terrible plight of the best minds in the troubled times of the civil wars is well illustrated by the experiences of the best man of this time—Cicero. Educated in the spirit of his age upon the writings of the Greek positivists, well informed of the achievements of Greek learning and science, Cicero exerted himself to convey these achievements to his contemporaries in his beautifully written Latin treatises. Toward the mystic tendencies

of his teacher, Posidonius, and the other world, he remained, in the first periods of his life, cold and skeptical. The bitter experiences of his later life, both political and personal, the ruin of his personal ambition and of his political ideal, the horrors of the civil wars of which he was a witness and finally an actor and a victim, cruel blows which fate dealt him in his family life, especially the death of his beloved daughter and friend, Tullia, brought about an almost complete change in his ideas and his interests. The old skeptic gradually disappears, the mystical element in the teachings of Posidonius emerges in him, and the great rationalist of his age finds it possible to compete with Plato in mystic visions, and to build for his daughter a lofty grave-temple not very different, probably, from the mysterious basilica of the Porta Maggiore of which I will speak later.

The stormy period of the civil wars closed at last. Peace and order were restored by one of the military leaders of the civil strife—Augustus, who found a new formula by which to reorganize the state in such a way as to reconcile the aspirations of rich and poor. The former leading classes lost their political domination but retained unimpaired their social and economic prestige and power. A Golden Age came back, similar to the best times

of the Greek cities and the Hellenistic monarchies. The Roman Empire soon became prosperous again. The cities regained and even amplified the splendor and the comfort of their life. Poetry, music, the plastic arts, flourished once more, and produced creations of lasting beauty. Scores of scholars began again to work on great scientific problems.

And yet the general mood of the people, upper and lower classes alike, was world-weary. Men could not regain that juvenile confidence in the invincible force of human intellect and of human creative power which, centuries ago, had produced the colossal achievements of Greek science and art. Years of suffering, of failure, and of gloomy speculation had ruined the faith of mankind in itself, and this faith could not be restored. What followed was inevitable. The classical literature of the Augustan age, with all its brilliance and refinement, is not able to produce new genres, new literary forms, new and inspiring ideas. The Roman art of the First and Second Centuries A. D., majestic and gorgeous as it is, lacks the fire of genius which animates even the works of minor artists of the classical and Hellenistic period. Science too does not succeed in finding new paths and discovering new devices; Roman scholars were content to

popularize the results of Greek research and to make them accessible to everybody in textbooks, encyclopaedias, and dictionaries.

Thus even after the end of the civil wars, in the artificial atmosphere of the new Golden Age, men did not regain their faith in themselves as the masters of the universe, and nobody believed any more in the supremacy of human reason over nature and God. Numbers of petty bourgeois and skeptical aristocrats, in the quiet and comfortable surroundings of their daily life, absorbed by their material interests and the pleasures which a good income provided for them and their families, took to themselves the trivialities of the current Epicureanism and showed to life and death a smiling and skeptical face. Read some of the poems of Horace, Tibullus, and Propertius, try to understand the psychology of Ovid and to savor the boundless "je m'en fiche" in Martial and Lucian, read, at the same time, the epitaphs, in metre and in prose, of hundreds of city residents, and you will understand how superficial and flat was the current materialism of the Roman Empire. The Epicureans of the imperial period boast of their materialism and skepticism, but they do not believe in it. If Vergil was an Epicurean, his Epicureanism was very shallow, and under it, in the Sixth book of

the Aeneid, appears another Vergil, full of horror before the other world and ready to accept New-Pythagorean conceptions. Blasphemies hurled at death, catchwords insulting all the spiritual aspirations of the human soul, could not conceal the abiding fear of men who faced death conscious of their weakness and impotence.

Excellent illustrations both of the superficial blasphemy and of the hidden fear of death are afforded by the well known silver goblets of Boscoreale and the imitations of similar metal ware in clay. The horrible dancing skeletons of great men of the past, the unseemly inscriptions of the most trivial character placed near them— "κτῶ, χρῶ" says one of them "acquire and enjoy" —reveal clearly that men were terribly afraid of the coming horror of death, and tried hard to dispel by such macabre pleasantries the gloomy pictures which constantly stood before their eyes.

Let us, however, go deeper; let us penetrate beneath the outward show of materialism and hedonism, and we shall see how strong was the religious and mystic current even in the happiest days of the Roman Empire. None of the philosophical and religious sects which I have mentioned above disappeared. Materialism gradually vanished; new-stoicism, new-pythagoreanism, orphism,

hermetism, gnosticism, astrology, and the Oriental religions, gained daily in strength and influence. And above all gradually developed the new Christian faith, which knew how to find access to human souls, and how to amalgamate the lofty teachings of Christ with the mysticism toward which the minds of all men tended.

It was evident that materialism was a lost cause; its vital forces were sapped beyond all possibility of reanimation. Little by little the dominant note in the spiritual life of mankind all over the Roman Empire became religious and mystic. When the blessed period of peace and prosperity created by Augustus and by his successors came to an end in the bloody crash of ancient civilization, inaugurated by the terrible social and political revolution of the Third Century, the scientific and materialistic conceptions of life vanished forever. Religion and mysticism triumphed over all. Men cared little for life on the earth, and concentrated their minds on their internal, spiritual life, in preparation for the real life which begins—after death.

This is one of the most important and the least studied processes in the history of mankind. Its causes and its evolution are little known. Its result was the triumph of the Christian faith, and of the religious conception of life which our modern

self-confidence and our materialism try in vain to throw overboard.

We live in an age which can be compared with the Hellenistic epoch in the history of the ancient world. We believe in our almighty mental power. We are confident that we are able to conquer nature and to reform human life. Religion is for a good many of us but a survival, a tradition, a social and moral concept. And yet religion is not dead. From the depth of human conscience mystic aspirations in their higher and lower aspects are coming up afresh, especially among those peoples who learned a bitter lesson in the turmoils of revolution led by the materialistic spirit of socialist teachings. Our time has not been able to produce a Lucretius, but the spirit which animated Lucretius is alive. For good or for bad? Are we nearing a time when religion will be vanquished and eliminated? Or is this the turning point by which our road will lead to a revival of mystic aspirations which may work the end of our proud civilization?

We are still far from fully understanding the religious evolution of the early Roman Empire. Much excellent work has been done but still more important material awaits the explorer. Among the most prolific sources of our information are the monuments of art and artistic industry. To

collect and to interpret them is a difficult task. One may easily exaggerate symbolism and repeat the fatal error of Creuzer. Nevertheless the task is attractive and full of promise; and although we must be careful not to carry symbolical interpretation too far, we must not forget, either, that at this particular time the air is full of religion and that in many cases there is no other way to explain the monuments except by invoking religion and symbolism.

In the two chapters which follow an attempt is made to interpret some of the most important archaeological evidence regarding the Greek mystery religions of the first three centuries A. D. in Pompeii and Rome. Some of the interpretations are new, some are based on those of other scholars, with modifications and changes. I have not always distinguished between the views for which I am alone responsible and those for which responsibility is shared with my predecessors, but means of resolving all doubts on that point will be found in the short bibliography appended to the last chapters.

MYSTIC POMPEII

CHAPTER II

MYSTIC POMPEII

Mystic Pompeii! Is not this title a "contradictio in adiecto"? The city of sun and wine, the city of gay, bright colors, the city of shops and taverns, the city of brisk municipal life, of actors and gladiators, what is mystic about it as every tourist knows it? Yet this Pompeii had also its mystic side, for in it, as we shall see, the adepts of mystic cults were numerous and influential, the *thiasoi* and the *speirai* of various creeds, both Greek and Oriental.

As regards Oriental mysteries, it is well known that Pompeii was one of the earliest centers of the Alexandrian cult of Isis and possessed a beautiful temple of this goddess adorned with many interesting frescoes. Other traces of the worship of Isis and Sarapis are spread far and wide over the city. Its popularity there is easily understood if we take into account the important trade relations between Campania and Egypt, especially during the First Century B. C. and the First Century A. D. No doubt, as at Athens and at Delos, there were many

Alexandrian merchants in Pompeii and here as elsewhere the first Greco-Egyptian temple was built to satisfy their religious needs. Other Oriental cults were slower to penetrate into Pompeii, but we have unmistakable traces of influences both of Syria and of Asia Minor on its trade and on its religion.

To study the Oriental cults in Pompeii would be interesting in itself and important for the religious history of Campania. Note that the frescoes of the Isis temple of Pompeii never have been published in full. But the aspect of mystic Pompeii, I mean Pompeii as a center of Greek mysteries, with which I am at this time concerned is Greek, not Oriental. Is there any probability that Pompeii was once a center of Greek mysteries?

Let me first remind the reader of some well known but very little appreciated facts.[1] The Sixth Century B. C. was an interesting time in the history of the Greek city states both on the mainland of Greece and in the colonies. The cities grew by leaps and bounds. The old tribal state and the old agricultural life were passing; their place was taken by the new city state and by a new type of economic life based on trade and industry, on foreign commerce and long voyages. New markets were opened to the Greek merchants: the Northern part

of the Balkan peninsula, the shores of the Black Sea, and, above all, the huge Persian Empire, which included Egypt and held the mastery of the Greek cities of Asia Minor, the great pioneers in trade and industry of the Greek world. In the West, flourishing Greek cities in Sicily and South Italy gradually drew into the orbit of their trade the whole of Italy, including the great Etruscan Empire.

Homeric Greece was gone forever, and with its going the Homeric religion, the religion of life and joy, underwent a great change. It was a time of economic crisis, of growing capitalism, of impoverished masses, of bitter social and political strife, of revolutions and counter-revolutions, of tyrants and lawgivers, of never ceasing wars between the leading cities and desperate struggles to increase their territory and to acquire new markets at the expense of their neighbors. We must not forget the terrible fate of Sybaris in South Italy and the narrow escape of Lokri from the same annihilation and destruction. It was a time, also, of close contact with Oriental civilizations and religions, most of which now, in the tolerant world Empire of Persia, deprived of their national bases, tried to assume cosmopolitan character and to attract proselytes. All this plunged Greece into

great confusion and brought about sweeping changes. Along with political, social, economic, and cultural developments, new currents in Greek religious thought characterized a new period in the evolution of Greece.

Life was full of perils and of misery; the struggle for existence, bitter as it was, was saturated with crime and sin, no help was forthcoming from the lofty Olympians, who cared very little for human misery and were not concerned with what was going to happen to man after his wretched human career had ended in death. Was death the end of everything or the beginning of a new existence? What about all the crimes and sins, just now so rife? Is there no responsibility for them? Human justice cannot protect men during their life on the earth. Is there no divine justice—no reward for the just, no punishment for the sinner? The mystery of life and death became the great preoccupation of the human mind and no solution of the all-important problem had been revealed by the Olympian gods or suggested by their "creators", either by Homer, or even by the pessimistic Hesiod.

All over Greece were spread many pre-Greek chthonic cults. Everywhere there were sanctuaries of the Great Mother, the goddess of the Earth,

the goddess of vegetation, the goddess of winter death and spring resurrection. Among the most famous was the sanctuary of Demeter at Eleusis near Athens. Almost every city of Asia Minor had its shrine of the Great Mother. In Sicily and Italy she was worshipped both by the natives and by the early Greek settlers. From the Thracian North, very likely, came another such cult with a god who was the counterpart of the Great Mother, the Great God of vegetation, Zagreus-Dionysus. The outstanding rite of his savage worship was "homophagia". In a wild "enthusiasm" his followers—women as well as men—would tear to pieces and devour the sacrificial victim, symbol of the god himself who had died the same death and had somehow come back to life. The cult of Dionysus spread far and wide all over Greece and the Greek colonies. The earliest Greek colony in Sicily, Naxos, was its earliest home in the West.

In connection with these cults were formed all over Greece little communities of worshippers of the Goddess or of the God. In their preoccupation about their ultimate fate they believed that by participating in the "mystery" of their Goddess or God, through a series of magic rites and incantations and an elaborate initiation (*telete*)—a sequence of symbolical acts representing death and

resurrection—they might escape the sad fate of the crowd, and as *mystai* secure for themselves a new life after death, the life of the blest.

The beginnings were insignificant, for the first mystai were but humble folk—slaves, male and female; modest, suffering peasants, still able to hear the voice of the Earth; workmen in the growing cities. Gradually, however, these cults attracted the attention and the devotion of men of higher standing. It was the heyday of philosophical speculation. Men undertook boldly to solve the problem of nature, of life, of death. Was it in Greece or in Italy that the first attempt was made to erect a religious philosophy on the foundation of an ancient chthonic cult? Was it under the partial influence of the more elaborate Oriental mystic religions? We do not know. We know, however, that in the Sixth Century B. C. both in South Italy and in the Athens of Pisistratus men attempted to construct on the basis of the savage myth of Zagreus-Dionysus a religious philosophy comprising the ideas of original sin, of redemption by a god who suffered for mankind, of the eternal struggle of the elemental and the divine in man, of good and evil, of ritual purification, of personal responsibility for sin, of infernal punishments for sinners. This religious philosophy was ascribed to

a mythical person, the great singer Orpheus, whose origin, whether Thracian or Greek, and whose original significance does not concern us here.

It is not my purpose to trace the development of Orphism, which is a much vexed and very difficult question. Was it originally a real religion which gradually became a kind of religious philosophy? Or was it such a religious philosophy from the very start? However that may be, Orphism affected to a very large extent the development of the Greek mystic religions, especially the most famous of them, the Eleusinian mysteries of Demeter and the various aspects of the mystic religion of Dionysus. It is well known that the Eleusinian deities incorporated into the Eleusinian triad the great divine sufferer Dionysus, and that the Eleusinian theology and ritual assumed more elaborate forms under the influence of Orphism. What is more important to us is the fact that after the Sixth Century B. C. the "sacred books", the *hieroi logoi* of the hundreds and thousands of Dionysiac communities all were affected in a smaller or larger degree by the elaborate philosophy and the complicated theology of the various Orphic "sacred books". As a distinct religion, pure Orphism is still a mystery to us; in its connection with the cult of Dionysus we know it better, both

from the literary sources and from many works of art.

Great was the success of Orphism in South Italy and Sicily. It is certain that the religious philosophy of Pythagoras, although centered on Apollo, the Apollo of Cumae and of the Cumaean Sibyl, was nevertheless Orphic in its very essence, and that the Pythagorean communities were all centers of Orphic speculation. Pythagoreans, Orphics, adepts of the Dionysiac and Eleusinian cults spread far and wide over Italy. On the mainland of Greece the mystic religions were on their decline in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B. C.; but these centuries witnessed a glorious flowering of mysticism in Italy and Sicily, both among the Greeks and, following the steadily increasing spread of Hellenism, in Etruria, Latium, Samnium, and especially Campania. The growth and prosperity of the prophetic cult of Apollo at Cumae, where the beautiful underground abode of the Cumaean Sibyl has been recently excavated, shows one aspect of it. Another, the Dionysiac and Orphic phase of the mystic aspirations of Italy, is revealed in the Orphic tablets of the Fourth or early Third Century found in South Italy (also in Crete), with elaborate advice to the dead what to do and how to act in the nether world; in the

beautiful and ghastly frescoes and bas-reliefs of the Inferno, so popular in the Etruscan graves of the Fourth Century, and reflecting to a certain extent mystic ideas (the last voyage of the dead, the last judgment, the topography of the nether world, etc.); in the contemporary frescoes of the graves of Campania, Samnium and Apulia depicting the great goddess of the nether world, the Italian Kore; in the painted vases of South Italy (Fourth and Third Centuries B. C.) with their representations of the Kingdom of Hades; in the curious recently discovered inscription of a Bacchic cemetery forbidding the burying of anybody but the *βεβαχχευμένοι* in the precincts of the cemetery; in the Roman legends of the relations of Pythagoras to Rome; in the early Arretine pottery and the early so-called Megarian ware of Italy dominated by the figure of Dionysus and reproducing in charming bas-reliefs many a scene of the ritual of Dionysiac mysteries.[2]

A new and powerful revival was experienced by the Greek mystic cults in the Hellenistic period.[3] The Macedonian princes of the house of Philip and Alexander are said to have been fervent disciples of Orphism. Orphic and Eleusinian elements played an important part in the new cults introduced by the Ptolemies and the Seleucids at

the very beginning of their respective rules in order to unite in a single devotion the natives and the Greeks of their multinational Empires: I mean the Alexandrian mystic cult of Osiris-Apis (Sarapis) the great god of the dead, and the Syrian Hellenized cult of Adonis, which found its way into Ptolemaic Egypt also. Fragments of an Orphic ritual were found recently in a Greek papyrus of the early Third Century B. C. Moreover, and of still greater significance, a recently discovered papyrus shows that the fourth Ptolemy, Philopator, not only shared the reverence of his ancestors towards the divine forefather of the Ptolemaic dynasty, Dionysus, and the Eleusinian triad but attempted to make the Orphic-Dionysiac religion the official religion of his Egyptian Empire. Note also that one of the reasons for the bitter fight of the Jews against the Syrian kings under the Maccabees was the tendency of Antiochus Epiphanes to force upon Jerusalem the cult of Dionysus. Orphic poems, Orphic treatises, a new Orphic literature, sprang up all over the Hellenistic world.

Nor was there any relaxation of the grip in which the Orphic-Dionysiac cults held Italy. The famous Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus of 186 B. C., known to us both from a bronze tablet publishing the decree itself and from the report of

Livy on the affair that occasioned it, shows how prominent were the Bacchic *thiasoi* and *speirai* in all Italy, including Rome, and how alarmed was the Senate about their rapid spread. The nocturnal gatherings of these religious associations, little known and mysterious as they were, with their orgiastic character and no doubt wildly enthusiastic ritual, gave the Roman Senators reason to think, or to pretend to think (for the persecutions may have been political in the last analysis), that they were undermining the morals of both sexes.

The drastic measures taken by the Senate did not, however, stop the spread of these cults and associations, which continued to live their own life regardless of Senatorial wrath. The trials of the Punic wars, which forced the Senate officially to recognize the first orgiastic Oriental cult in Rome, the cult of Magna Mater, certainly fostered also the spread of the more congenial, wholly Hellenized Bacchic cults in the cities of Italy.

And now came the time of the great civil war in Italy, with bloody fights in the capital, murders and confiscations all over Italy, repeated mobilizations, and battle after battle fought for the sake of ambitious generals, in which fathers were killed by sons, brothers by brothers. Vain was the hope of Lucretius that his appeal to reason, to

science, would free men from superstition and fear. They were far readier to listen to the mystics who promised redemption, salvation, and a glorious life beyond the grave after earthly sufferings were over.

Such were the conditions under which mankind lived in the dreadful times of Marius and Sulla, Pompey and Caesar, Octavianus and Antony. With the victory of Augustus over Antony and Cleopatra a new era began for Italy and for the world. Slowly and tenaciously Augustus began his work of restoration, based on general exhaustion and on a mood of despair. Have we the right to assume that this was a time when mystic aspirations had no place in the internal life of men? The old ideals were destroyed, the great past was dead, the world had found its master. Quiet and peace reigned again, to be sure; but for how long? Meanwhile men continued to think of themselves, and of their individual salvation.

Pompeii was buried in 79 A. D. by the famous eruption of Vesuvius. The excavations have revealed to us this Pompeii of 79, the gay, materialistic city of the latter part of the First Century, the time of the greatest prosperity and happiness of the ancient world. However, many monuments and houses of Pompeii belong to earlier periods

and reflect the life of Pompeii in earlier times. Wall-paintings enable us to distinguish three periods: the late republican period (the Third, the Second and the early First Centuries B. C.), showing the so-called first style of mural decoration; the period after Sulla, with decorations in the second style; and the period of the immediate successors of Augustus, the time of the Egyptianizing third style. The earliest period is almost mute. The mural decoration is ornamental; the mosaics are copies of Hellenistic originals and do not reflect the life of Pompeii. The second style, however, is of different character. In the mural decoration figures appear and soon dominate. Great pictures of the past are reproduced on the walls by artists and skillful artisans. Cycles of life-sized figures cover the walls of many beautiful rooms, executed in the same style and in the same manner as those which adorned the Athenian buildings decorated by Polygnotus and his successors.

What do these paintings signify? The style and the motives are not confined to Pompeii. We have some examples of them in Rome also; for instance, the paintings of the beautiful house of Livia and the stuccoes and frescoes of the gorgeous house discovered in the Farnesina. I may also mention the Homeric landscapes of the Esquiline and the

wonderful stuccoes of the so-called basilica of the Porta Maggiore. Two of these monuments at least —the Farnesina and the basilica—are dominated in their decoration by mystic ideas. The Farnesina leads us into the Eleusiniac and Bacchic mysteries; the basilica of the Porta Maggiore was certainly a shrine, the church of a mystic community, probably Pythagorean, as Cumont suggested and Carcopino now has proved. These monuments will engage our attention later. But what of Pompeii? Was the case different there?

Many and very interesting monuments show that it was not. Pompeii of this time was, we may be sure, a city where the Dionysiac mysteries had a permanent home, and where everybody, certainly every member of the educated classes, was familiar with the peculiar pictorial language of these mysteries. There is almost no house in Pompeii with mural decorations of the second or third style which wholly lacks pictures representing Dionysiac rites or scattered figures or groups of the Dionysiac cycle. The most striking series of such pictures is presented by the decoration of a large room in the so-called "Villa mystica", known also as Villa Item, on the outskirts of Pompeii. Almost as complete is the series of pictures in an underground room of the "Homeric" house inside of the city on the

II. Plan of the "Villa Mystica" in Pompeii.

"strada dell' Abbondanza". Some of the paintings of the famous villa near Boscoreale, of which one part is in Naples, another in the Metropolitan Museum at New York and a third in the Collection Warocqué in Brussels, may reflect some rites and ideas of the Dionysiac mysteries. And scattered groups of figures, fragments of similar large and continuous sets, may be found in the decoration of many other houses and villas of Pompeii of the First Century B. C. and the early First Century A. D.[4]

Let me describe briefly two sets of these mystic pictures of Pompeii, that of the "Villa mystica" and that of the "Homeric" house and quote and describe some of the other similar monuments of Pompeii in connection with this description.

The villa of the mysteries was discovered by chance a few years ago near the road leading from Pompeii to Herculaneum, not far from the so-called Porta Ercolanense[5]. It has never been fully excavated. What has been excavated consists of two parts (pl. II). One is an ordinary series of rooms grouped around a spacious peristyle; the other shows peculiar, in fact, unique features. This second part consists of a large sitting room with beautiful decorations of the second style, a spacious anteroom with two small adjoining

III. Two views of the Dionysiac room. "Villa Mystica."
POMPEII.

rooms on one side of the sitting room, and a large covered terrace with a small adjoining room on the other. It is probable that a similar suite of rooms is hidden under the rubbish of the Northern unexcavated part of this section of the villa, and it may be that another set of pictures corresponding to that of the central sitting room of this section will be found there.

The decoration of the suite of rooms which I have just described is Dionysiac throughout. Scattered figures of Satyrs and Maenads, some of them represented as if they were statues, may be seen everywhere in the rooms which surround the central sitting room. Whether these fragments formed originally a continuous set of figures with a special meaning is a matter of guess work. There is no doubt, however, that the decoration of the central sitting room—life-sized figures on a red background occupying the central part of each wall—forms a continuous composition of rare beauty dominated by a single idea—the Dionysiac mystery (pl. III).

The connection between the decoration of the sitting room and the mysteries of Dionysus was recognized at once by the scholars who investigated the paintings of the Villa Item from the religious point of view. In matters of detail, however,

there is a wide divergence of opinion among the scholars who have dealt with the villa. Some regard the decoration as consisting of "disiecta membra" of different compositions, all more or less connected with Dionysus and his mysteries. Some others recognize the unity of the composition but disagree as regards the central idea. Thus Rizzo sees in the composition the story of the primordial initiation of Dionysus himself into his own mysteries. Since the scene of the "decking of the bride" does not fit into this explanation, he argues that this scene does not belong to the cycle. Macchioro, however, insists upon the strict unity of the composition and gives an ingenious explanation of the cycle on the conception that it illustrates the Orphic mass of one of the Orphic-Dionysiac *thiasoi* or *speirai.*

I cannot enter into a minute discussion of the various interpretations advanced by the scholars whose names I have mentioned above, and by others. I doubt very much, however, that the seven consecutive pictures of the room represent seven consecutive acts of a Dionysiac mass held on the occasion of an initiation of a new *mysta.* It is also hard to believe that the leading theme of the series of pictures was the story of the initiation of Dionysus himself into his own mysteries.

In my own opinion the scenes of the frieze reminded the initiated and the neophyte ready to be initiated of mythical precedents of initiation, of divine *mystai* and their experiences, and of some of the principal symbols of the Dionysiac religion. I agree with Macchioro that the veiled woman who appears in some of the scenes represents a soul ready to be initiated. In some of the scenes this symbolical figure takes an active part in the performance, in others it is a mere spectator of mystic acts.

Let me now explain from my point of view, as far as it is possible, the seven consecutive pictures of the frieze. The initiation of a soul into the mysteries is often compared with a wedding, the initiation being thought of as a sacred wedding (*hieros gamos*) of the soul to her divine bridegroom, Dionysus himself. This idea of a sacred wedding I regard as the leading idea of some, at least, of the pictures of the Villa Item.

The first scene, which occupies the fragments of the wall near the main entrance, represents, no doubt, "the decking of the bride". The bride, probably one of the mythical brides of Dionysus, is "taking the veil", as Macchioro puts it. She is assisted by a friend and by a little Amor who is holding before her a mirror. The magic signifi-

cance of the mirror is obvious. Behind her another Amor is looking at the performance, and so is a majestic priestess seated in an armchair. She is quiet and thoughtful. She knows, for she has been a bride herself. The two Amors symbolize the sacred love which animates the soul, the holy fire which leads her into the trying adventure.

Next comes another beautiful group which consists of three figures: a girl with a veil drawn over her head, a priestess or goddess with a half-open roll in her left hand, and a little naked boy wearing Dionysiac shoes who reads aloud to the two women the contents of another roll (pl. IV, 1). The meaning of the scene is obvious. The boy, as Rizzo has suggested, is probably Dionysus himself. He is reading the "sacred book", the *hieros logos*. It is a glimpse of the time when Dionysus himself was initiated into the sacred mysteries of his own religion. To this act of the initiation of the god himself, to this primordial reading of the holy "contract", is now admitted the soul who is to be initiated. She partakes in the instruction which was given to the god himself by a priestess, or rather a divinity. Similar scenes occur frequently on monuments which tell the story of Dionysus' life. A beautiful composition of similar type adorns the wall of a portico which once belonged to a rich and

1.

2.

IV. 1. Reading of the "Sacred book." 2. "Lekanomantela."
Details of two pictures. Dionysiac room of the "Villa Mystica."
POMPEII.

splendid house in Rome, the so-called Villa Farnesina. I have mentioned the paintings and stucco bas-reliefs of this room before, and shall refer to them frequently in this and in the next chapter. The owner of the Villa Farnesina was no doubt a fervent devotee of the Dionysiac mysteries. All the pictures of the vault and many on the walls have a religious meaning, and most of them present aspects of the Dionysiac rites and symbols of the Dionysiac religion.

Four figures form the third group, all women. A myrtle crowned older priestess is seated at a sacrificial table. She is officiating. With her left hand she lifts the veil from a dish which a girl brings her; with her right she holds a myrtle branch over a flat dish. A young girl, also crowned with myrtle, is making a libation over this branch. In her lap she holds the sacred roll—the ritual book. Another girl crowned with myrtle is advancing from the left, bringing a dish with a wedding cake cut into slices. Which of these four figures is the bride? Surely the girl who brings the veiled dish of which the mystic contents are revealed by the seated priestess. The face of this girl is very similar to that of the corresponding figures in the other scenes; she is the only one of the four who is excited and frightened; she wears

no crown, in this unlike the priestess and the assistants, and her offering is obviously a mystery since the chief priestess in taking the veil from it does not dare to look at the revealed offering. Besides she is obviously the central figure of the picture. It must be admitted, however, that her dress is not that of a bride. Similar, though not identical, groups of figures are not uncommon in scenes representing the wedding ceremonies of the Greeks and Romans; for example, a well known Pompeian picture in the Museum of Naples.[6]

Exclusively mythical beings form the fourth group. A Silenus playing the lyre, a Satyrisk and a Satyrisca. The meaning of the action in which these three persons are engaged is obvious and has been recognized by Macchioro. It is the miracle of the virgin-milk. The girl Satyrisca (I cannot believe that such a little girl has already experienced the trials of motherhood) is giving her breast to a kid whose mother stands near by and listens to the lyre of the Silenus and to the flute of the Satyrisk. The kid is, no doubt, Dionysus himself. The act is probably one of those miracles which had a symbolical meaning in the Dionysiac mysteries. "Ἔριφος εἰς γάλ' ἔπετον (or ἔπετες)" say the Dionysiac gold tablets of South Italy. "I, the Kid, (or "thou, the Kid"), fell into the

milk". What the saying means is a matter of dispute and does not concern us here. But what has this miracle to do with the history of the initiated soul? Is it not a vision of the soul? Vision of one of the most mysterious miracles of the religion of Dionysus? And is the vision not related to the sacred wedding? Motherhood of a virgin, the symbolical union of the mother-virgin with her husband-son?

The soul appears again in the fifth scene. Three members of the Dionysiac rout—Silenus and two Satyrs—are engaged in a religious rite (pl. IV, 2). The nature of the rite has occasioned much discussion among scholars. The Silenus holds a deep cup; one Satyr is looking into it or drinking out of it; another is holding up over the head of the Silenus the Dionysiac symbol, the mask. If the boy Satyr is looking into the cup, the scene, no doubt, represents an act of divination by means of a mirror (katoptromanteia) or by means of a cup full of water (lekanomanteia). Divination by means of a mirror or a cup is one of the most common rites connected with the mystery religions of the ancient world and is still in use everywhere all over the world. If, however, the boy is drinking out of the cup and not looking into the cup, as has been suggested, the rite which is performed is in

the nature of the holy communion. However that may be,—and to me a close study of the fresco suggests divination—the scene certainly represents a ritual act and is not plain genre.

I omit at this point the next (sixth) scene, which interrupts the sequence of the pictures, returning to it later to indicate why it has been inserted here. The last two or three groups of figures of the frieze are the most difficult to understand and to explain. A priestess is shown lifting the veil from the most characteristic of all Dionysiac symbols—that contained in the famous Dionysiac *liknon*, the *phallus*. To the left of the priestess with the liknon are two fragmentary figures of girls with sacrificial dishes in their hands; to the right, a winged woman who makes a gesture of terrified refusal, turning her head away from the symbol; in her right hand she holds a rod. Before her, to her right, there is another group of two figures; a half naked girl who is hiding her face in the lap of her companion, and near this group to the right a Maenad performing in the presence of another girl an ecstatic dance. All the members of this group or groups except the crying girl are well known to us. They occur frequently in pictures and bas-reliefs related to the Dionysiac mysteries. The revelation of the phallus is one of the most

V. Initiation of a "mysta" in the Dionysiac mysteries and the revelation of the phallus. *Terra-cotta bas-relief.* LOUVRE, PARIS

common scenes of the Dionysiac pictorial repertory. The liknon and the winged, terrified figure occur frequently on the so-called Campana reliefs—parts of terra-cotta friezes of sacred or profane buildings of the early imperial period.[7] Equally frequent is the scene of the revelation of the phallus to an initiate. I reproduce here one of the Campana reliefs which may serve as a typical example (pl. V).[8] The dancing Maenad, too, is monotonously repeated in the Dionysiac pictorial language. For all this, no good explanation of our group has been suggested. For whom is the revelation intended? For the winged figure or the crying girl? And why is the girl crying? Is the winged figure administering a purifying flagellation to the crying girl?

I would like for my part to make one scene out of the two or three groups described above. The symbol is revealed to the bride. In horror and consternation she hides her face in the lap of her companion. The winged goddess is probably the goddess of initiation—Telete.[9] The revelation is not for her, wherefore she makes her apotropaic gesture. The theory of flagellation cannot be accepted, for there is no connection between the winged goddess and the crying girl. The two figures to the left of the liknon are assistants of the

priestess. Finally the ecstatic dance of the Maenad may stand for the supreme beatitude of the initiated.

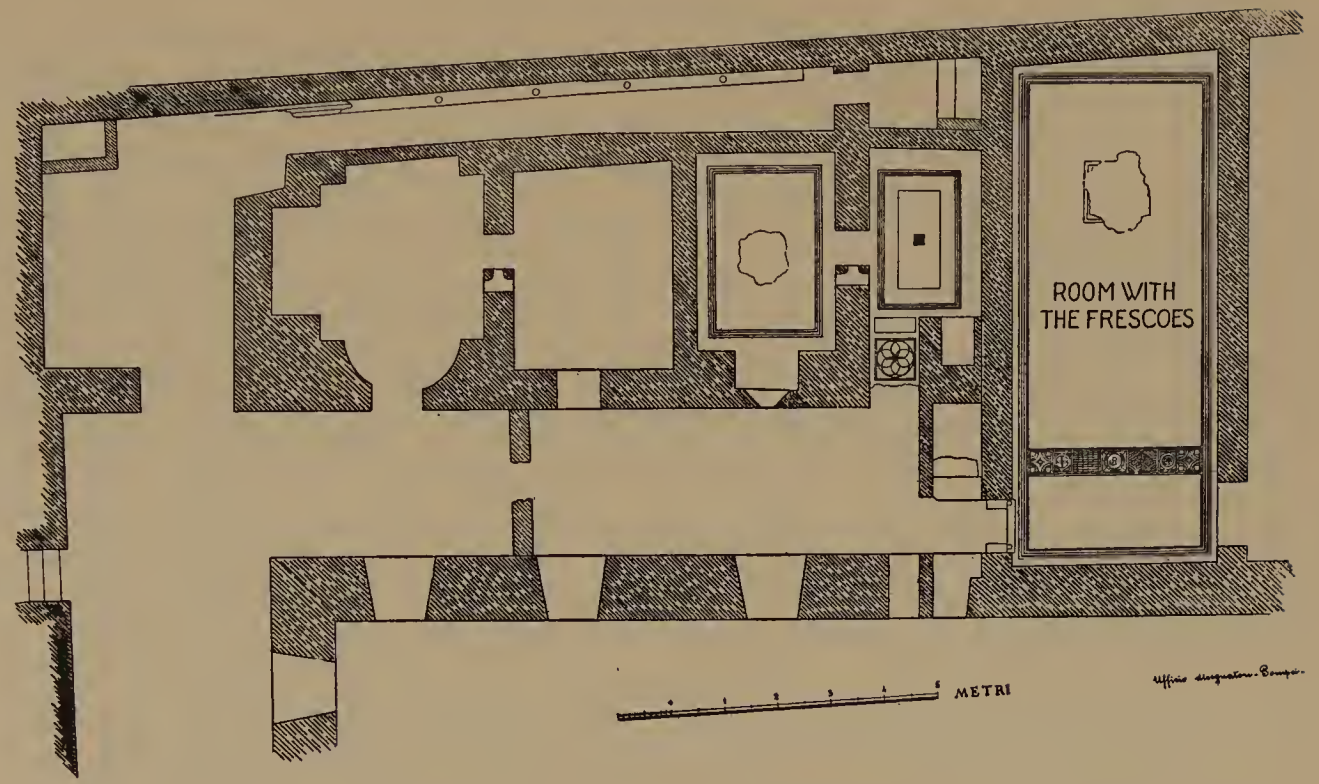
I consider as the last scene of the cycle the group which is inserted between the scene of divination and that of revelation, I mean the group which represents Dionysus resting in beatitude in the lap of his divine consort—Ariadne, or whoever she may be. The scene is inserted opposite the entrance because it was intended to be seen first and to give the key to the other scenes. It is the apotheosis of the initiated soul, the last act in her experiences. She is divine like the divine bride of the great god, divine forever. I reproduce here a similar, almost identical, group which formed a part of the decoration of the straight corridor of the Villa Farnesina (pl. XXII, 1).

Scenes resembling those of the sitting room of the Villa Item form part of the decoration of an underground room in the beautiful "Homeric" house of the strada dell'Abbondanza. Several years ago I devoted a special article to this house (London Times, 1923, reprinted in the New York Times). It is not, however, the house itself which concerns us here. The report of the excavations has not been published yet, and we must await it before we can understand the house in its original

form, for it originally belonged to the Samnite period, but was rebuilt and disfigured later, in the second half of the First Century A. D.[10]

One of the most interesting peculiarities of the original "Homeric" house consists in the fact that the rear of the house, which is built around a spacious garden, has two stories; one aboveground, which does not concern us here, and the other underground. On two sides of the garden a wide corridor runs underground. It is lighted by windows which open into the garden, and has a beautiful mural decoration of the second style. The most interesting part of this decoration is a frieze which runs from one end of the corridor to the other and gives a sequence of scenes illustrating the most famous episodes of the Iliad and other poems of the Epic cycle. The names of the heroes are written above the figures in Greek (pl. VI).

One part of the corridor (that to the north of the garden) has no adjoining rooms. A small square exedra opens into it and this is all. Different is the eastern corridor. Here we have four sets of beautiful rooms, each set or suite connected with the corridor but not otherwise connected with the other suites: a single room with an adjoining narrow passage, a suite of two rooms (only one has preserved the beautiful stucco decoration of the



VI. Plan of one part of the underground corridor and adjoining rooms of the "Homeric" house at Pompeii.

ceiling), another suite of two rooms with excellent paintings of the second style (sacred landscapes of the sort typical of decoration in the second style) and a single room of which the situation and the decoration are quite peculiar.

After the three suites which I have mentioned above, the corridor apparently ends. At its lower end there was probably a door, later destroyed. This door led into a small antechamber with a pavement of a plain *opus signinum* into which led also a flight of steps from the upper rooms of the house. There existed therefore a special connection between the last room of the underground quarters and the upper house. The owner of the house and his guests were able to penetrate into this last room without passing through the corridor.

From the antechamber a second door led through a small vestibulum into a beautiful spacious room, oblong, of the form of a triclinium; but to penetrate into this room one had to lift a heavy curtain which separated the room proper with its special pavement and its special decoration from the "vestibulum". This vestibulum, like the antechamber already described, had a special pavement (very plain black mosaic with inlaid pieces of marble of various colors) and a special wall decoration very similar to the decoration of the corridor. How-

ever, the wall decoration of the vestibulum differs from that of the corridor in the significant fact that the center of the wall is occupied by a picture of a rustic sanctuary of Dionysus in the center of which stands a column with a crater (?) on it. Another peculiar feature of this vestibulum is that a large window opens from it into an adjoining kitchen which is otherwise not connected with the corridor rooms at all.

The impression which is produced by this arrangement is that the last room was carefully isolated from the rest of the rooms of the underground floor and not less carefully hidden from the eyes of those who did not know of its existence. The connection with the kitchen shows that it was a triclinium, in spite of the fact that the room itself contains no trace of special arrangements for dinner parties. Similar triclinia were connected with many Oriental and mystic sanctuaries. Cumont quotes a culina connected with a temple of Malachbel and frequent mentions of cenatoria and triclinia connected with temples of Jupiter Dolichenus in inscriptions. The ruins of mystic sanctuaries in Greece show that the case was not different with the Greek mystic cults.[11] As I have mentioned above, the room was separated from the vestibulum by a heavy curtain. The

place of the curtain is marked by a mosaic threshold, a band of beautiful geometric and floral ornaments, and by a stucco arch-end, the beginning of a barrel vault which covered the main part of the room and once had a beautiful stucco decoration of which there still exist some fragments.

The pavement of the room is very plain: a mosaic of black stones with inserted fragments of colored marble. The framed center of this mosaic is missing. It is probable that originally a marble table or a marble altar stood here, and that in removing this table or altar the pavement of the center of the room was destroyed. The wall paintings of a large part of the short back wall and of the long left wall of the room have perished also. The rest of the decoration, however, is in a comparatively good state of preservation, although some spots are disfigured by sketches of beasts and gladiators which apparently were incised by those who lived in this room when in the last period of Pompeii all these beautiful underground rooms, with the corridor, were transformed into a storehouse or wine-cellar and probably into quarters for the slaves who were in charge of the storehouse.

Let me describe the original decoration of the room (pl. VII). On a purple dado rests the decoration of the central part of the wall, which de-

VII. General view of the right wall of the "mystic" room of the "Homeric" house. POMPEII.

picts a yellow wall with a portico of Caryatids before it. All the Caryatids are figures of the Dionysiac cycle: the first to the right of the curtain represents a Satyr with a syrinx, the second a Maenad with cymbals (?), the third a middle-aged inspired Silenus with a double flute, the fourth a Maenad with a beautiful horn, the fifth a Maenad with a patera or a musical instrument, and, after a long stretch of destroyed decoration, two more figures in the left part of the left long wall represent Maenads, one with a tympanon, the other with a lyre.

The Caryatids support consoles on which rests a beautiful plastic stucco cornice, adorned with the heads (*protomai*) of bulls; and the bull, we must remember, is Dionysus himself.

Beneath the cornice and the consoles runs a frieze imitating a wooden show-case in each of the compartments of which stands a picture in a wooden frame with special wooden doors, a kind of triptych, which is a motive very common in the decorations of the second style. Yet, common as the motive is, we must not forget that the peculiar form of the triptych, which permitted a picture to be hidden on occasion from profane eyes, is typical for the representations of pictures which appear over and again in scenes portraying Diony-

VIII. Sacrificial table. *Fresco. "Mystic" room of the "Homeric" house.* POMPEII.

siac rites. In these scenes (see below) the picture stands open because it is thought of as being revealed to the initiated.

The pictures of the underground triclinium represent alternately scenes with human figures and tables or altars with sacrificial offerings. One is reproduced on our pl. VIII. It shows a sacrificial table with a basket and an embroidered napkin, which covers a part of the basket; the basket is full of fruit and very like the ritual *liknon;* to the left stands a cock. The right long wall, which is completely preserved, has three scenes with human figures and two tables. The short back wall shows in its right part a table with a sacrificial cake on it. Thus the next missing picture was a scene with human figures and the third and last on the short wall, also missing, a sacrificial table again. On the left long wall only one picture, that on the left, is preserved. Since it is a scene with human figures and the last picture of the short wall was a table, we must assume that the sequence of the pictures of the left wall was exactly the same as that of the right wall—three scenes with human figures and two tables. Thus the decoration of the room consisted originally of seven scenes with human figures and of six sacrificial tables, of which four scenes and three tables are still intact

IX. "Divination." *Fresco. "Mystic" room of the "Homeric" house.* POMPEII.

If one enters the room through the curtained door and turns, as is natural, to his right, the first picture which he sees is a figured composition (pl. IX). On a couch or a natural rock lie a Silenus and a Maenad. The Silenus is highly excited. He lifts his right hand in admiration and looks attentively into a round mirror or a shallow bowl of mirror-like appearance which a Satyr who stands behind the couch is holding in his right hand before a Satyrisk who kneels and gazes at or into the mirror. The mouth of the Satyrisk is wide open. The Satyr who holds the mirror or the bowl makes with his left hand a gesture which probably invites the Satyrisk to look into the mirror. The Satyrisk is evidently telling something, to the great amazement of the Silenus. Behind this group there is a girl with a sacrificial dish in her left hand. She is also fixing her eyes in admiration and terror on what is going on among the four members of the Dionysiac rout. In the right corner stands a high bowl, and inside it a cylindrical vase full of water. A mere glance at the divination picture of the "Villa of mysteries" shows that the scene which I just have described is very similar. If the scene there is one of divination, so is our scene also. The participants in both belong to the Dionysiac rout. Those who act as seers are in each case mere

boys, the youngest of the group. And in the background there is in both scenes the figure of a girl.

I cannot conceal, however, that there are details in my explanation which are doubtful and controversial. As Amelung pointed out to me in conversation shortly before his premature death, the Satyr who holds the mirror, or whatever the object he is holding may be (a mirror-like cup or a dish?), he holds it in such a way that his thumb covers a large part of it, which makes it almost impossible for the kneeling boy to see anything in the mirror. Amelung insisted also upon the point that the Satyr who is holding the mirror or the cup seems to find his task amusing, resembling in this the Satyr who holds the mask in the corresponding scene of the Villa Item. It seems to me, however, very doubtful whether we have the right, in interpreting such pictures, to press details. The painter is everywhere impressionistic, illusionistic; he seeks the general effect and is careless of minutiae. The thumb that is so prominent is "out of drawing". And as to the Satyr's amusement, that is surely a matter in which the painter, especially if he were not himself an adept, may have given his fancy free rein. Moreover, it must be remembered that there are incidents in the mythical and mystical history of Dionysus, such as the instruction which he

received from Proselymnus, at which even an adept, though acquainted with the respectable and serious interpretation put upon these incidents by the cult, might allow a Satyr to smile.

I must confess that a very close study of this picture has convinced me that no explanation of it can be satisfactory which does not recognize in the act represented a religious act, a ritual performance connected with the Dionysiac mysteries. If so, the only act or rite which can be suggested is that of divination by means of a mirror. It is well known that the mirror plays a very important part in the story of the passion of Zagreus.

The next picture consists of four figures (pl. X). An old man with features which suggest not only Silenus but Socrates, dressed in an ample white "tribon", with heavy shoes on his feet, is seated on a wooden chair. He leans with his right hand on a staff (the "baculum" of the philosophers) and has his left hand outstretched in one of the common argumentative gestures of Greek and Roman conversation. He is addressing two women. One—tall, majestic, and of classical beauty, dressed in a long robe and a long wide cloak, looks attentively at him and holds with her right hand the right hand of a veiled girl, evidently agitated, who stands to the right and be-

X. "The nether world." *Fresco. "Mystic" room of the "Homeric" house.* POMPEII.

hind her. In her left hand the divine woman holds a cup. In the right corner of the picture sits a boatman in his boat. He wears the usual ferryman's dress, with a broad hat, and has a long beard. He is looking at the group, and no doubt listening to the speech of the philosopher, in amazement and reverence. With his right hand he makes a gesture, perhaps capable of more than one interpretation.

To this scene, as it stands, I know of no parallel, though the single parts of the composition are familiar and occur often on paintings and basreliefs. The key to the explanation of the scene is given by the figure of the boatman, in whom no one will fail to recognize Charon, the ferryman of the nether world, as he is represented over and over again both on Greek and on Roman monuments, especially on the Attic funerary *lekythoi* (pl. XI). The closest and most significant parallel, however, is afforded by the well known *puteal* of the Vatican, where Charon is represented transporting the souls to the lower world (pl. XII). One soul is still in his boat. He points her out the goal of the voyage, the other shore. Two other souls, a man and a boy, are led by Clotho to meet a goddess who stands waiting with a crater in her right hand and another attribute in her left

XI. "Charon, Hermes and the soul." *Picture of a funerary Attic lekythos.* ANTIQUARIUM, MUNICH.

—probably the same figure as that in our picture.[12]

The combination of the Silenus-like philosopher and of the majestic divine woman is also not uncommon in the repertory of the Greco-Roman art. It appears, for example, as an ornamental group in a Pompeian wall decoration (pl. XIII, 1).[13] The figure of a philosopher, standing or seated, recurs also in other compositions of which I shall speak presently and which are all connected with rites of mystic religions. The staff, the primitive dress, the Socratic features, make one think particularly of the Cynic or the Stoic school. The veiled excited figure, too, is well known to us. She appears in almost all the scenes of the "Villa mystica", and is never missing in the pictures of the cycle which I am describing now.

While thus the component parts of our picture are all familiar to us, the combination of them is unusual, indeed unique. Consequently, in trying to solve the problem of the scene we must resort freely to conjecture. The key of the explanation is given, as I have already said, by the figure of Charon. The presence of Charon points to the underworld as the place where the scene is located. The ferryman has just taken a passenger over to the underworld—a soul. The soul is, no doubt

XII. "Charon, the souls and the nether world." *Marble puteal.* VATICAN, ROME.

the veiled girl. But what about the divine woman and the philosopher? In the inscribed Dionysiac tablets found in South Italy and in Crete which advise the initiated soul how to act after it has left the body, the first advice is to avoid the Spring of Forgetfulness and to stop at the Lake of Memory (Mnemosyne), where the Queen of the Underworld will give to the soul of the initiated a drink which will keep her memory intact and will help her, when she comes before the tribunal of the Great God of the underworld, to face the judge and to present her case in the best possible manner. Is not the divine woman of our picture the goddess, standing ready to administer the cup of Memory to the soul? But first the soul must have somewhat to remember—she must receive instruction. This is imparted by the principal actor in the scene, the philosopher. What is he doing at the threshold of the underworld, unless he is the personification of the divine wisdom of the cult, the wisdom that saves the soul in life and death alike—if it is remembered? Who is it that here personifies this wisdom? We cannot be certain. The Silenus-like face strongly suggests the hierophant of the Dionysiac mysteries, Silenus himself, who often appears as a noble wise man with very little left of his beastly na-

1.

2.

XIII. 1. "The philosopher and the woman." *Fresco. Suburban villa near Pompeii.*

2. "The wise Silenus." *Stucco bas-relief. Court of the Stabian baths.* POMPEII.

ture; for instance, the Silenus of the Villa Item, the Silenus who plays the flute in this room itself, a beautiful Silenus in the stucco decorations of the Stabian baths at Pompeii (pl. XIII, 2). Plato's comparison of Socrates and Silenus is perhaps more inclusive than has been thought; not only did Socrates outwardly resemble Silenus, but Silenus, we may infer, like Socrates, was "full of wisdom within". The philosophic dress is natural enough; it marks the office, for the earthly hierophant would always be a philosopher like Pythagoras, and clothe himself as such. If the figure is not meant for Silenus, we may think of Herakles, the mystic prototype of the Stoic and Cynic philosophers, who himself had been initiated into the great Hellenic mysteries, or of Teiresias, to whom alone, according to Homer, Persephone accorded the privilege of retaining his wisdom after death.

The explanation, then, which I venture to suggest for our picture is as follows. After the divination which reveals to the soul her future, or whatever else it may reveal, she is shown confronting the greatest mystery of life, the mystery of death. She meets the prototype of her earthly adviser, the philosopher and hierophant, on the threshold of the underworld and is initiated into that crowning mystery. (Initiation is notoriously

XIV. "Revelation of the pinax." *Fresco. "Mystic" room of the "Homeric" house.* POMPEII.

a symbol of death. The candidate for initiation must die before he becomes initiated. The old man must die and the new, the pure one, is born in the symbolical act of death and rebirth, resurrection.)

Still more puzzling is the next scene (pl. XIV). A half-naked girl is sitting on a seat with four legs, finely carved; her feet rest on a footstool. Before her is a large crater. She is represented in thoughtful attitude, the chin resting on the right hand, with the elbow supported on the right knee. The left hand rests on the left knee. To the right is a large shield. Behind the seated girl stands our old acquaintance, the veiled woman, with her right hand lifted in a gesture resembling that of Charon in the previous scene. Both the seated and the standing figures are looking toward a naked boy, who holds in front of him, with the lower end resting on the ground, a large tablet which he is showing, or rather revealing to them. Between the two figures and the boy, slightly in the background, stands a majestic winged goddess with a palm branch in her left hand and a little hammer- or key-like instrument in her right, which she is holding just above, perhaps on, the shield. She too is looking with concentrated attention at the tablet displayed by the boy.

XV. "Revelation of the triptych." *Marble bas-relief.* LOUVRE, PARIS.

The single figures of the scene are not unfamiliar to us. The boy reminds us of the boy Dionysus in the scene of the reading of the sacred books in the "Villa mystica". Similar figures with rolls occur often in scenes of mystic teaching; for example, in the stucco decoration of the vault of the "basilica" of the Porta Maggiore (pls. XXIX-XXX). They are found with especial frequency on Etruscan sarcophagi and urns, where the instructors are the infernal demons.[14] In other pictures and reliefs the revealed object is not a manuscript but, as here, a picture, usually a triptych. The best examples are one of the stuccoes of the Villa Farnesina (pl. XXIV, 1) and a relief in the Louvre (pl. XV). In this last we see two beautiful oak trees. Before them a sacred rite is performed. A priestess is officiating over an altar. On the other side of the altar stands a Silenus who is directing a naked boy who carries on his head the sacred liknon with the phallus inside it. Between the trees stands a column with an open triptych on it. This column was previously hidden from the eyes of those present by a heavy curtain. Now the curtain has been removed and the triptych stands revealed to the participants in the rite.

The standing winged woman looks like a Victory, a Nike. The object she is holding in her

right hand recalls similar objects which appear frequently in the hands of infernal demons who take an active part in the "farewell" scenes of Etruscan painted graves, sarcophagi and funeral urns, and which are explained with great probability as "keys" to the underworld.[15] The general features of the winged goddess of our picture are very much like those of the winged goddess in the scene of the revelation of the Villa Item and in many terra-cotta reliefs of the Augustan age with the same scene where the goddess, as in the Villa Item, is terrified by the sight of the liknon and is ready to fly away. In discussing the frescoes of the Villa Item we have given to this figure, in agreement with Macchioro, the name of Telete, the goddess of initiation. Her presence in our scene of revelation is easily explained. If the object she is holding is a key, this attribute well suits the goddess who opens a new world to the initiated.

But what of the picture that is revealed? Can we still see what the maiden saw? Before the picture itself, I did not think so, but photography often reveals more than the unaided eye can detect. In the photograph are clearly discernible traces of the painting on the tablet, which gradually take shape as we look. My friend Harmon,

who called my attention to the significance of these traces, says of them: "It seems to me that one can distinguish clearly in the upper part of the painting the outline of a large, elliptical object, surely a jar; down the left side is a wavy line suggesting the outline of the human figure, and at the bottom two legs, of which that on the left side of the painting (the right leg of the figure) is most distinct. Close examination seems to disclose a face, the upper part of which interrupts the outline of the bottom of the jar; but this may be illusory. A human figure with a jar on its head or shoulders can only be a *hydrophoros* of the type generally spoken of as Danaids—an uninitiated, sinning soul, condemned as Plato says in the *Gorgias*, because of its disbelief and forgetfulness *διὰ ἀπιστίαν τεκαὶ λήθην* to pour water into a leaky jar (*τετρημένος πίθος*)". With all this I agree fully, and may add that the lower margin of the figure's dress is clearly visible at the height of the knees. The so-called Danaids, to be sure, are generally thought of as Pythagorean symbolism, but Carcopino, in commenting on the Danaids represented in the Basilica of the Porta Maggiore, has shown that they were taken over by the Pythagoreans from the Dionysiac-Orphic religion.

There is no doubt, therefore, that the scene as

XVI. "King, Queen and philosopher." *Fresco of a villa near Pompeii.* MUSEUM OF NAPLES.

I have described it represents again a sacred rite —the rite of revelation. The revealed object is a picture. The revelation is carried out by a boy in the presence of a goddess, probably the goddess of initiation, Telete, or the goddess of Victory; in any case the palm branch symbolizes the victory over the mystery of life and death effected by the revelation. Who is the seated figure? I do not know. No doubt a heroine, not a plain mortal. One involuntarily thinks of Alkestis, who plays such a large part in almost all the mystic religions of the Hellenistic and Roman period.[16]

As to the shield, which may be connected with the figure of the Telete or Victory, I may remind the reader that a girl with a shield appears in one of two almost identical scenes which adorned the side walls of an "oecus" in a villa discovered near Boscoreale. The paintings from one of the walls are now in Naples (pl. XVI), the paintings from the other in the Metropolitan Museum of New York (pl. XVII). One of these scenes (that in Naples) represents a Macedonian king and a majestic woman seated in the presence of a philosopher (all the figures of this scene are portraits); the other scene (in New York) depicts a similar group (the man, however, is a hero, not a mortal)

XVII. "Hero, heroine and a woman with a shield." *Fresco of a villa near Pompeii.* METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, NEW YORK.

in which the place of the philosopher is taken by a girl who holds a shield. It is hard to believe with Studniczka that the two scenes are simply genre scenes without any meaning, portrait groups. I am confident that the meaning is religious and that religious acts are represented. Is it not the act of mystic instruction? [17]

I must also mention in this connection two pictures in an extensive series which once adorned the wall of a corridor of the Villa Farnesina. These pictures have been already cited and reproduced by E. G. Rizzo in his memoir on "Dionysos mystes" in connection with the Villa Item set. The relation between the Farnesina pictures and those of the "Homeric" house is still closer. As far as I can see, all the scenes of the corridor are religious. The two to which I refer are the best preserved of the set (pl. XXII, 2 and pl. XXIII). The first (A 7) shows the interior of a room (blue background). A half naked male figure with long hair is seated in an armchair or throne with a footstool under his feet. The legs of the figure are covered with a purple mantle. The figure certainly represents a king or a hero. Behind him is a standing female figure, veiled. The figures, then, are grouped exactly as in our picture of the "Homeric house". Before the king is a low table

covered with a purple spread, on which are several objects impossible to recognize. Behind the table is a standing or seated woman talking to the pair. Her arms are lifted and bent at the elbows. She was probably showing something to the king and to his consort. In the background is a statue of a god (Priapus?) on a pillar, and before the pillar a low altar and a vase.

The second picture (A 9) represents a similar scene; against a blue background, a pilaster, and before the pilaster a seated bearded man with a white cloak, which is spread over both his body and his head. At the left is a winged goddess in a lilac dress, the wings colored blue. Her right hand is resting on a club or a shield. To the right is a woman wearing a lilac dress, seated in a chair, her head leaning on her right hand. Between the winged goddess and the man is a column or a columnar altar. We are familiar with all the figures and with their grouping; the philosopher or hierophant, the winged goddess, the thoughtful seated woman.[18]

To return to the cycle of the "Homeric house", the next three pictures are missing. We cannot even guess what the subjects of them may have been. The last picture of the set, however, that in the right corner of the left wall, is in a good

state of preservation (pl. XVIII). It is again peculiar and puzzling. A young half naked girl is seated in a two-wheeled cart of rustic appearance. Her waist and her legs are covered with a white spread. Behind her is a girl-attendant, dressing her hair. The chariot is drawn by two women, one young, the other old. The old woman reminds one very much of the old woman in the Pompeian and Herculanean pictures of Admetus and Alkestis. The group is preceded by a dancing Maenad playing the double flute.

Again I am unable to quote any other ancient monument which reproduces exactly the same scene. Well known are the common representations of the wedding procession of Dionysus and his divine bride—Ariadne, or whoever, on each occasion she may be. The procession is preceded and followed by the members of the Dionysiac crowd. The rustic chariot provided for a bride and groom and drawn by two participants in the wedding ceremony recurs in one of the pictures of a house in Ostia (now in the Vatican pl. XIX). The picture represents the sacred wedding of a "king" and a "queen".[19] It may be mentioned also that chariots drawn by men appear sometimes in Etruscan art in the scenes of the last journey—that to the Kingdom of Hades.

XVIII. "The sacred wedding." *Fresco. "Mystic" room of the "Homeric" house.* POMPEII.

The Dionysiac character of our procession is evident. The Maenad is there, and the Dionysiac musical instruments. The girl in the cart and her attendant make it very probable that we have here a bridal procession. The bride is driven to her divine bridegroom—no doubt Dionysus himself—by female members of his rout. I am inclined to think that the subject which is represented here may have been inspired by the bridal procession of the "Basilinna" at Athens at the great festival of Dionysus. The old woman would then be the chief priestess who presided at the ceremony and acted as the "pronuba". The God is waiting for his bride in the sacred precincts of his temple. Yet as Amelung pointed out, it is surprising that the bride does not wear the bridal dress.

The picture just described makes a very fitting conclusion to the series of pictures of the "Homeric" house. Like the picture of Dionysus resting in the lap of his divine bride which we saw in the "Villa mystica," it represents the last act in the experience of the initiated soul. She is shown her own betrothal to the God symbolized in the reproduction of a scene which was well known to the devotees of Dionysus at Athens and probably at many other places to which that peculiar

XIX. "Wedding of a King and Queen." *Fresco from Ostia.* VATICAN, ROME.

blend of Eleusinian and Dionysiac mystery had been transplanted.

There are, as the reader has seen, striking similarities between the two cycles of Dionysiac pictures that we have discussed—that of the "Villa mystica" and that of the underground room in the "Homeric" house. The two cycles, however, are not identical. The cycle of the "Villa mystica" has its own selection of pictures and its own versions of those scenes which are most similar to those of the "Homeric" house: the scene supposed to be divination, and that of the revelation of the sacred books or paintings. Greek art, as we know, does not like exact repetition. Every artist gives his own version of the same episode. Nevertheless, the two cycles are derived from similar religious ideas and conceptions. Both of them reflect various acts in the great mysteries of Dionysus. The mystery, however, is never revealed.

We must not suppose that in either case we are dealing with direct representations of the various acts which took place in the Dionysiac *thiasoi* when the rite of initiation into the Dionysiac mysteries was performed, or that any scenes bear directly upon the Dionysiac-Orphic mass. They are allusions only, reminding the men and women who came together in the two rooms of some of the

well known myths and symbols of the Dionysiac religion. The various stages of initiation were guarded as a close secret by the members of the Dionysiac *thiasoi* and *speirai*, and of course could not be revealed in the pictures of a room which was accessible not only to initiates and neophytes but also to many others who had nothing to do with the mysteries. For those—the *amaetoi*—the noninitiated, the pictures were meaningless, no more than beautiful decorations of a gorgeous room. No wonder that in interpreting them we —the *amaetoi*—are reduced to mere guesses.

Macchioro has suggested that the decorated room in the "Villa mystica" was the room in which the members of a Dionysiac thiasos of Pompeii of the First Century B. C. held their regular nocturnal meetings. Whether this suggestion should be accepted or not is a difficult question. I am inclined to believe that the room was too much exposed to be used for secret gatherings. The isolated situation of the underground triclinium in the "Homeric" house suits much better the requirements for an initiation room, a "lodge" room. Here in the half darkness gathered, no doubt, members of a Dionysiac secret society, and here the Dionysiac mass and the Dionysiac "agape" were performed from time to time. No other

explanation can be given to a room so beautifully decorated, so unique in its location and its designs. A fitting introduction into the revelations which awaited the visitors was given to them by the contemplation of the various episodes of the Homeric cycle in the corridor. We know how extensively these episodes were employed by the mystic religions to symbolize their most cherished revelations.

The frescoes of the "Villa mystica" and those of the "Homeric" house are not the only works of art which reveal the mystic, especially the Dionysiac, aspirations of the residents of Pompeii in the First Century B. C. and the First Century A. D. I have previously referred (see note 4) to other monuments of Pompeii which reflect the cult of Dionysus. Let me conclude this chapter by describing yet another, a very curious object which testifies to the wide spread of Dionysiac mysteries in that city. I allude to the crest of one of the many gladiatorial helmets which have been found in Pompeii and which are now kept in the Museum of Naples. The crest is adorned with a set of Dionysiac bas-reliefs (pl. XX).[20]

On one side of it are four Dionysiac scenes. The central scene curiously enough is an exact repetition of one of the designs which appears on

XX. Gladiatorial helmet adorned with Dionysiac bas-reliefs.
MUSEUM OF NAPLES.

the "Campana" bas-reliefs in terra cotta—the design reproduced in pl. V. The scene represents the initiation of a mysta and the revelation to the initiated of the phallus. To the left of this scene is a rustic sanctuary of Dionysus under a beautiful tree, the center of the sanctuary being occupied by a statue of Dionysus. Between this and the central scene is a sacrificial table. To the right of the central scene is the representation of a ritual act which is figured many times on similar monuments; for example on the Thraco-Mithriac icones which I have discussed in a special memoir.[21] From a sacrificial animal (probably a pig or a sheep), suspended by its hind legs to a tree, the entrails are being removed and the blood collected in a large dish. The last scene (in a second register below) represents a sacrifice to Priapus.

The other side of the crest is likewise adorned with four scenes of Bacchic ritual. The central is again a scene of initiation very similar to that represented on the Louvre bas-relief dealt with and reproduced above (pl. XV). An old Silenus is represented putting the sacred liknon on the head of a naked boy who is to carry the liknon to a priestess seated or standing near the altar. The priestess seems about to lift the veil which covers the phallus of the liknon. The group of the

Silenus and the naked boy is identical with that of the Louvre bas-relief, while the figure of the priestess is different. To the left of this group a scene of Dionysiac ecstasis is represented: a Maenad dancing in the presence of the Silenus. Below, a repetition of the scene with the sacrificial animal on the other side of the crest. Finally, to the right of the central scene, another curious ritual Dionysiac scene is shown. Three Satyrs are busy around a large circular kettle. One is kindling a fire (?) under the kettle. Two others are holding a pig over the kettle in such a way that its genitalia are above the kettle (sacrifice of the genitalia and their blood to Dionysus?).

There is no doubt that our helmet was not made to the special order of a gladiator. Identical or similar helmets no doubt were on sale ready made in the rich shops of the Campanian smiths, and toreuts. If there was a demand for helmets with such adornment it shows how widespread was the belief in the magical power of the Dionysiac ritual. It is hard to believe, however, that such helmets were worn by anybody but those who had been initiated into the Dionysiac mysteries.

Another observation is suggested by the study of this helmet in connection with the Campana bas-reliefs, the Louvre bas-relief and the stuccoes

of the Farnesina house (pls. XXIV-XXVII). While in the earlier sets of Dionysiac subjects, those of the "Villa mystica" and of the "Homeric" house, we never met with repetitions and never with scenes which represented the very act of initiation, later, in the First Century A. D., a set of especially favored scenes was created, most of them representing the act of initiation. These scenes took gradually a definite almost ritual form, became stereotyped and were repeated over and over on various monuments.

MYSTIC ROME

CHAPTER III

MYSTIC ROME

After the Punic wars, the conquest of the Hellenistic Orient, and the destruction of Carthage and Corinth, Rome became and remained for centuries the capital of the civilized world—the *οἰκουμένη* of the Greeks, the "orbis terrarum" or "orbis Romanus" of the Romans. The city of Rome was now the center of the government of the Roman world state. The business life of the world, and, first and foremost, world banking and international commerce, shifted gradually from Corinth, Delos, Rhodos, Ephesus, and Alexandria to Rome. The Roman Forum became the center of exchange of the ancient world. Its intellectual life shifted likewise ever more and more to the capital on the Tiber. The reputation of a philosopher, an orator, a great poet was not complete as long as his work was not known and appreciated by the members of the Roman aristocracy. And every star of the intellectual sky regarded it as a great honor to be invited for a couple of lectures or recitations to the world cap-

ital. We cannot wonder, then, that from the First Century B. C. Rome became more and more an international city as time went on. Many a prominent Greek took up temporary or permanent residence in the city of Rome in one capacity or another—as ambassador, as business-man, as artist, actor or musician, as rhetor or philosopher. Thousands of less prominence, of all nations, poured into the city in the hope of acquiring fortune and "renommée". And last but not least scores of thousands of slaves—Greeks, Orientals, natives of Central, Western and Eastern Europe, Berbers and negroes from Africa—lived and worked for years at the great courts of the rulers of the world, at the minor courts of the Roman aristocracy and of the most prominent and richest members of the bourgeoisie, and in the shops and factories, in the docks and offices of the ever growing city. Thousands of them, after years of service, were manumitted and became Roman citizens. Regular foreign colonies were gradually formed in the suburbs of the capital, the most conspicuous being those which kept separate and apart from the rest of the population—the Jews and to a certain extent the Syrians.

In this way Rome became the melting pot not only of nations but also of religions. Let me

dwell for a moment on this aspect of the city of Rome to make a short general survey of the religious aspirations and beliefs of the various groups of the population of Rome.[1]

The most prominent place was occupied by the official religion of the Roman State. Every member of the great Roman Empire, citizen or "peregrinus", freedman or slave, was supposed to pay his reverence to the great gods of the Roman Empire, the age-old triad, Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, whose lofty house towered high on the Capitol. The houses of their consorts and associates, gods and goddesses of the Latin, Sabine, Etruscan, and Greek Pantheon were scattered far and wide over the city of Rome, the most prominent surrounding the Roman Forum. Age-old ceremonies were performed in these temples and in the streets and public squares and buildings of the city of Rome by members of the Roman priesthood grouped into various "collegia sacerdotum". Gorgeous games were given in their honor. These venerable protectors of the Roman State aroused general esteem and reverence but very little religious feeling.

More modern and more important was the brand-new official cult of the masters of the Universe: the emperor, his deified ancestors, his fam-

ily. In the persons of these new gods and goddesses, whose cult was closely connected with the cult of the Goddess Roma, the residents of the Roman Empire paid their reverence to the stable unity of the Roman Empire and to the blessings of the new regime. Scores of minor deities—personifications of the various sides of the character and activity of the emperor—were associated with the cult of the emperor and appeared with the surname of "Augusti" or "Augustae" on many an official monument (including the coins) of the Roman Empire, and on hundreds of private altars and votive offerings of the population of Rome. Abundance, Concord, Justice, Piety, Peace, Salus, Virtus, and their like were worshiped all over the city of Rome and all over the Roman Empire, and their statues often showed the features of the emperors themselves or their divine consorts.

This cult of the emperors presented a strange mixture of heterogeneous religious conceptions and ideas. At the root of it lay very primitive religious conceptions closely connected with the venerable family cult of the Italians in general and the Latins and Romans in particular. It was not the emperor bodily who was worshiped by the Italians in Rome, Italy and the provinces but his eternal divine creative essence—his "genius".

Since the Roman Empire was now one "house", one "family", the father of this family, the head and master of this house, represented not only the creative forces of his own narrow family circle, but those of the Roman State in general; that is, the whole civilized world, and first and foremost the ruling body of the Empire—the Roman citizens. His "genius", the "genius" of the emperor and of the Roman Empire was surrounded by the "geniuses" of the various constituent parts of the Empire—from the Goddess Roma, and the "genius" of the "Populus Romanus", to the "genius" of the house-father of a modest Roman home in Rome, Italy, or the provinces. Such was the Italian aspect of the imperial cult, the aspect under which it was so easy for an Italian and a Roman to worship a mortal being, an aspect which reflected the leading idea of the Roman citizens: a great Roman house dominating over the whole of the civilized world.

However, the emperor ruled over an Empire which consisted not only of Italians and Romans. And these Italians and Romans were no longer the Italians and Romans of the great peasant Republic. They had new ideas and points of view which came from Greece and from the Orient, which still held sway in the minds of the millions

of the subjects of the Roman Empire who swarmed in the Oriental provinces of Rome and emigrated by thousands to Italy and to the West. To the influence of Greece and of the Orient, to the fact that the emperors themselves were as regards their mentality no longer pure Italians and Romans, is due the second aspect of the imperial cult, which is not Italian but reflects the Greek religious conceptions of the Hellenistic period. The emperor is not a man like other human beings; he is more than that—a superman, a hero, a divine man or humanized god, many of whom had appeared among men from time to time, from the remote past to days quite recent, for the sake of saving mankind. It was under this aspect that the Hellenistic kings had been worshiped by their Greek subjects, and this form of worship was acceptable not only to the Greeks and Hellenized Orientals but also to those Western parts of the world which accepted and assimilated Greek ideas and Greek religious conceptions.

Julius Caesar and Augustus were saviors of mankind. They restored peace and prosperity after the turmoil and chaos of the civil wars. Their successors kept their heritage intact for generations. "Why should they not be worshiped as heroes, as saviors? No *man* is equal to such an

achievement! And who knows whether these 'men' are human beings, anyway? Are they not children of gods or very gods themselves, who have come down from heaven and consented to be with men and rule over them for the time of their human existence?" This point of view gives rise to the various and repeated attempts to provide the emperors with divine parents or to identify them with those gods who loomed largest in the religious imagination of the time. The masses were more disposed to identify the emperors with those gods who protected and increased their material prosperity: Mercury, Hercules, Apollo, Bacchus. As regards the intellectuals, for those who were inclined to Pythagorean conceptions, it was natural to connect the emperor with Apollo, the great God of the Pythagoreans, God of light and harmony; while for those who were more enthusiastic about the idea of the mystic rebirth of man and of a God Savior who suffered and died for mankind the natural equation of the emperor was with the God of the Orphic mysteries—Dionysus. Most of the intellectuals, however, shared the ideas and the ideals of the Stoics, and *the* God of the Stoics was Herakles, who by toil and pain, by hard work, by suffering, by high moral qualities, by evincing the strongest possible sense of duty

at the end of his life on the earth had attained a place among the Olympians. Was not this the most adequate symbol for the life of a good emperor?

For a while the cult of the emperors was a real religion for many a resident of the Roman Empire. In the long run, however, it was impossible to maintain warm religious feeling towards a succession of men who had so little of divine in them. Consequently the imperial cult became gradually, like the cult of the Capitoline triad, a convention, a formula, a tradition, an abstraction and not a religion.

Thus the official religion of Rome—the cult of the Capitoline triad and the cult of the emperor —never became and was not capable of ever becoming a real religion for the millions of the population of both the city of Rome and the Roman Empire. They were imposing superstructures on age-old religious foundations which still were firm and solid, but they did not interfere in the least with a rapid and gorgeous development of the religious aspirations, new and old, of the different classes and groups of the international population of the city of Rome. Large masses in Rome, those of Italian origin, still believed in the ancient gods of the primitive Italian family

religion—in the "Genius" of the "pater familias" and the "Juno" of the "mater", in the "Lares" and the "Penates"—the spirits of its prosperity, and in the "Manes"—the spirits of its deceased members. And the same Italian and Italianized plebs had genuine respect and warm feeling towards those gods of the Italo-Greek Pantheon who had the reputation of being the dispensers of wealth and material welfare; Mercury, Bacchus, Hercules, and Apollo on the one hand, Minerva, Ceres, and Venus on the other were worshiped in most of the little shrines of the private houses, the so-called Lararia. Still more revered was the powerful Fortuna, the Tyche of the Greeks, the goddess of luck and success; innumerable statues and statuettes of her with the borrowed attributes of various other gods, native and imported, are found in the ruins of all the cities of the Roman Empire, and dedications to her count by the thousand. Nor did those who came to Rome from the provinces and from foreign lands, free men and slaves, soldiers and civilians, forget in their new international home their native gods of Western and Eastern origin: the Illyrian, Celtic, German, Thracian, Berber gods and goddesses and the thousand deities of Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria, Persia and the Iranian lands.

Most prominent among these foreign cults were those which were organized as mystery religions, religions of salvation, and which impressed the craving souls of the Roman plebs by their strange ceremonies and rites and by the Oriental fanaticism of their priests and devotees. The religions of Magna Mater and of Isis were the first to come; later appeared the Phoenician, Syrian, Thracian gods and goddesses with their respective mysteries, among which the most impressive and the most exciting were the mysteries of the Iranian Mithra, those of the Jewish Jahve, and the Greco-Semitic "mysteries" of the Christians.

All these Oriental cults which under Greek influence developed into real mystery religions had many things in common. All the groups of worshipers of a given god in a given place formed well organized mystic communities, the organization of these communities being the same everywhere. All the Oriental mystic cults had well established theologies and rituals, and they all endeavored to attract into their shrines and communities new members, as many proselytes as possible. Some of them had even higher ambitions; they wanted to make proselytes not only among the members of the half literate "plebs Romana" or "urbana" but among intellectuals also, and ac-

cordingly reconstructed their theology and their cult on more refined and more philosophical lines.

For the majority of the intellectuals, however, religions of the masses were too primitive and too childish. They paid their respect to the State religion—to the cult of the Capitoline triad and to that of the Emperor. But their motive, naturally, was political, not religious. Some of them, to be sure, were attracted and deeply moved by the beauty of the Greek gods, as expressed in art and poetry. Horace's gods of the Greek Pantheon are more than mere beautiful poetic fictions. We perceive warm religious feeling in some of Horace's lofty hymns to these Greek gods, to the gods of Homer and of the great Greek poets of the classical and Hellenistic age. And yet all this was not capable of satisfying the real religious needs of those intellectuals who did not acquiesce in the rationalistic teachings of the post-Socratic philosophy. They could take refuge only in the mystery-religions, the religions of Salvation. The Oriental religions attracted some of them. However, there still was a strong general prejudice against the Orient not only among the Greeks but especially among the Romans. Besides, the "mystery" of some of these religions, those which were not so thoroughly Hellenized as the religion of

Sarapis and Isis or the religion of Adonis, was too primitive, too near to the original myth, too repulsive in its ceremonies, too similar to what the intellectuals called superstition. More attractive, deeper, more spiritual and more philosophical were the Greek mystery religions: the Eleusinian mysteries, the Dionysiac Orphism, the lofty philosophical teachings of the Pythagoreans.

We do not know very much of these Greek mystery religions in this phase of their development. The literary texts are scanty and fragmentary. The inscriptions are almost silent. We do not know exactly whether the new flowering of Dionysiac and Eleusinian mystic religions in Italy and especially in Rome was due entirely to the old traditions of which I spoke in the preceding chapter or to a new wave of influences which came from the Dionysiac and Eleusinian lands *κατ'ἐξοχήν* — Ptolemaic Egypt and the Asia Minor of the Attalids. For fuller information on this and many other important questions we must resort not only to literary texts and inscriptions, but to archaeological evidence, which is unusually rich both for the First Century A. D. and for the later period. For the First Century A. D., the time of Augustus, it is as rich and as instructive in Rome as in Pompeii and it is not so strictly

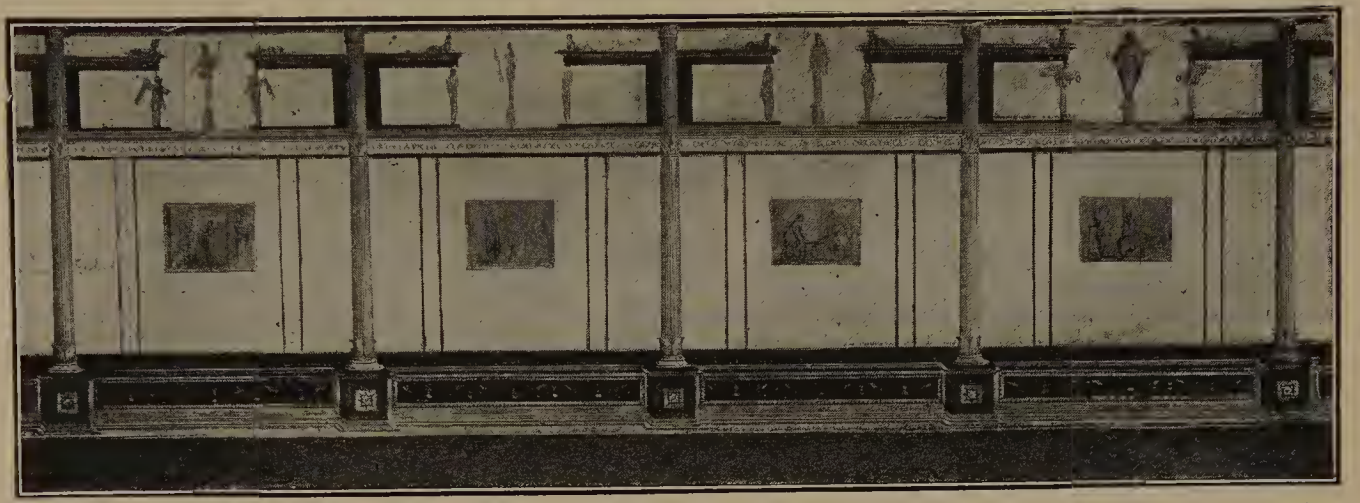
confined to the Dionysiac mysteries. Let me begin with these monuments of the First Century A. D., taking up and describing the most important of them.

There are two classes of evidence which require to be investigated in this connection: that afforded by the decorations (internal and external, plastic and pictorial) of funeral monuments (graves, sarcophagi, sepulchral urns, sepulchral altars and *stelai*) and that which may be derived from the decorations of private houses and sanctuaries. It is impossible to deal in this short paper with the first class, for it would be a long and difficult task to collect, classify and interpret the material, a task which has never yet been undertaken. I will come back to this class of evidence later in this chapter.

More important, however, for the First Century A. D. than the funeral monuments are the houses and places of worship. An extensive repertory of Dionysiac motives and scenes may be found in the stucco and painted decorations of the interesting private house in the gardens of the Villa Farnesina on the Tiber, part of which was exhumed in the seventies of the last century, and a real mine of information as to the mystery religions of the First Century A. D., especially the

Pythagorean mysteries, is contained in the decorations of the recently discovered sanctuary called the "basilica" of the Porta Maggiore. Let us briefly consider these two monuments in order to gather a general idea of their importance for the study of the Greek mystery religions of Rome in the First Century A. D.

I begin with the Farnesina house.[2] Only a small portion of it was unearthed. The decorations of this part of the house were taken from the walls and ceilings and stored in the Museo delle Terme. The walls themselves were then destroyed. To judge from the published plan, the excavated portion was one wing of a large and beautiful building which may have formed the center of a rich city house, not unlike a country house or *villa*. This wing was appended to a large central semi-circular portico, beautifully decorated, and opened into another large and beautifully decorated portico which ran straight along the whole building (No. 1 on the plan). The wing as far as its rooms were excavated comprised a large open room (a kind of "atrium") accessible from the rectangular portico, two smaller rooms which opened into this larger room, something like the "alae" of the ordinary Roman house (No. 3 and 4), a passage between these two



XXI. Part of the wall of the portico No. 1 of the Farnesina house. *Reconstruction of the mural decoration made immediately after the discovery of the house before the destruction of its walls.* MUSEO DELLE TERME, ROME. (*With permission of Prof. R. Paribeni.*)

"alae", and a large sitting room ("oecus") behind the "alae", corresponding roughly to the "tablinum" of the typical Roman house of the First Century A. D. (No. 5). To the right of the larger room—the "atrium"—a small bedroom has been excavated (No. 2).

Not only the porticoes but all the rooms of the wing which bear numbers on the map were richly decorated. Beautiful paintings covered their walls, and in the three rooms No. 2, 3 and 4 were found fragments of the rich stucco decoration of their vaulted ceilings.

I cannot describe these paintings and stuccoes, all of which show the same style and belong to the same time—the early First Century A. D., the time of Augustus. My aim is simply to point out that the character of the decoration of some of these rooms is unmistakably mystic. This note is most conspicuous in the decorations of the corridor, No. 1, and the three rooms No. 2, 3 and 4.

The corridor shows the type of architectural decoration so characteristic of the second Pompeian style (pl. XXI). Each of the panels into which the main surface of the wall is divided has in its center either a little framed picture or an unframed sacred landscape. It is a pity that the framed pictures are so badly preserved. Never-

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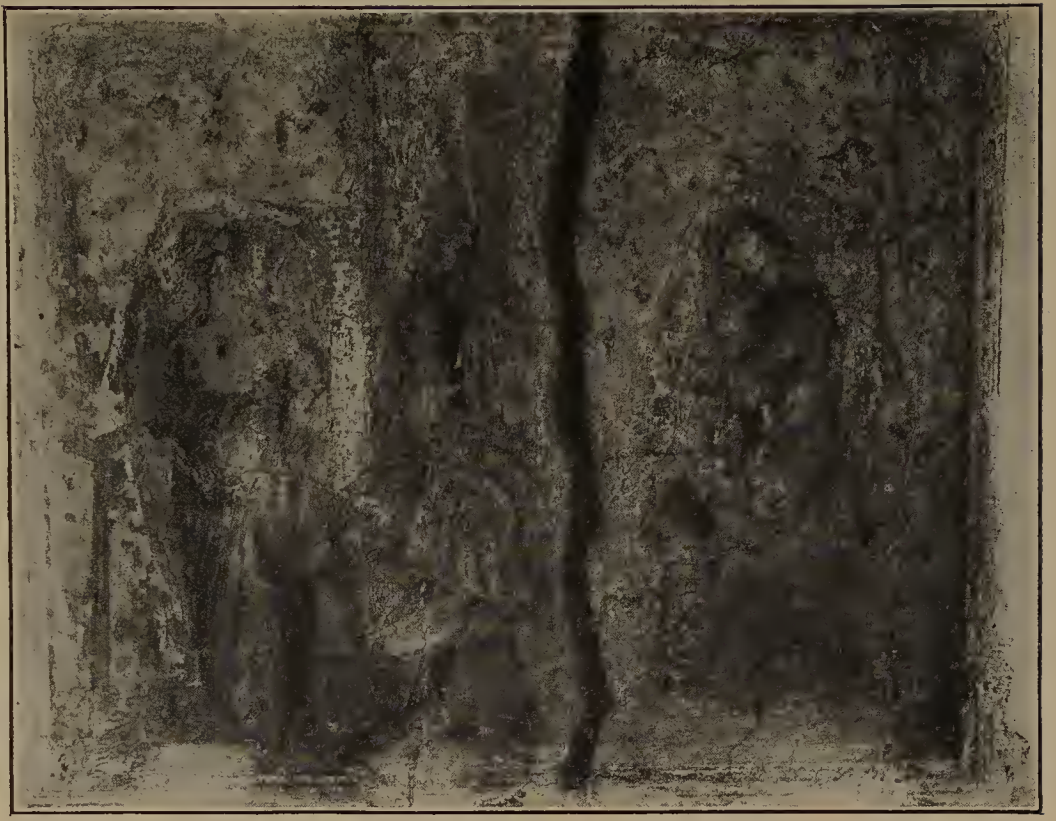
2.

XXII. 1."Dionysus in the company of his divine consort." 2. "Revelation." *Frescoes of the corridor No. 1 of the Farnesina house. Copies of the original pictures taken immediately after discovery.* MUSEO DELLE TERME, ROME. (*With permission of Prof. R. Paribeni.*)

theless, a close study of these pictures reveals that all of them have a religious character and those of them which are better preserved are strikingly similar to the pictures of the Villa Item and the "Homeric" house. I may mention particularly the four pictures which I have mentioned in the preceding chapter: the scene interpreted by Rizzo as the initiation of the little Dionysus, and the scene showing Dionysus resting in the lap of his divine bride near his sacred pillar, almost a repetition of the central picture of the Villa Item (pl. XXII, 1), that of the "revelation" (pl. XXII, 2) and that of the "sacred instruction" (pl. XXIII). I do not dare to enter into the interpretation of the other pictures, which would require a long special study, but none of them, I may say, is mere genre; all are related to religion, and this religion was that of Dionysus.

An interesting mixture of Dionysiac and Eleusinian elements is shown by the decoration of room No. 2, a bedroom, especially of its bed-niche. The back wall displays in its center a rustic sanctuary of Dionysus and to the right and left of it two little pictures connected with the Dionysiac religion. Is not one of them a scene of divination? All the decorative figures of the room are Bacchic except for the ceiling, where the leading



XXIII. "Sacred instruction." *Fresco of the corridor No. 1 of the Farnesina house.*
MUSEO DELLE TERME. ROME.

idea is Eleusinian. This is shown by the heads of Demeter and Kore which form the respective centers of the two symmetrically decorated sides of the vault, by the full-length figures of Demeter and Hermes standing on either side of the sacred landscape in each corner panel of the vault, and by the larger mythological panels, one on each side of the vault, which reproduce scenes from the myth of Helios and Phaëthon, in keeping with the main motive because of the close relation that existed between Demeter and Helios.

Consistently Bacchic are the decorations of the rooms No. 3 and 4, which also were probably bedrooms. In room No. 3 the central picture cannot be interpreted. The little pictures of the walls are all of them either scenes of matrimonial love in the spirit of the "Nozze Aldobrandini" or representations of religious ceremonies. The ceiling is Dionysiac in all its details. The places which were occupied in the ceiling of room No. 1 by the heads of Demeter and Kore are here occupied by those of a bearded Dionysus. The four beautiful pictures in the corners of the ceiling show all of them Dionysiac rites: revelation of the "pinax" (pl. XXIV, 1), offering of garlands (pl. XXIV, 2), sacrifice in a rustic sanctuary (pl. XXV, 1),

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2.

XXIV. 1. "Revelation of a pinax (triptych)." 2. Offering of garlands and fruit to Priapus. *Stucco bas-reliefs. Corners of the ceiling of room No. 3 of the Farnesina house.* MUSEO DELLE TERME, ROME.

another sacrifice in the presence of a drunken Silenus (pl. XXV, 2).

Still more Dionysiac is the decoration of room No. 4. Aphrodite and Dionysus are here the two great gods. Aphrodite sits enthroned in one of the great central pictures of the room, and the birth of Dionysus is the theme of the other. Scenes of love alternating with theatrical or Bacchic scenes form the subjects of the charming small pictures. Not only Dionysiac but mystic are the four pictures of the ceiling. Initiation of the boy Dionysus in the mysteries by a priestess and a Silenus (pl. XXVI, 1), a sacred rite performed by a Satyr and a Maenad over the figure of the boy Dionysus (pl. XXVI, 2), revelation of the *phallus* in the *liknon* (pl. XXVII, 1), and a wild Bacchanal (pl. XXVII, 2) reflect various stages of Bacchic initiation. And over these pictures are beautiful heads of the "Indian Bacchus" again.

The prevalence of religious, especially mystic, motives in that part of the Villa Farnesina which we have been considering is instructive and characterizes the tendencies of the time. The most intimate apartments of the owner are full of pictures which make it certain that both the husband and the wife were deeply religious and probably

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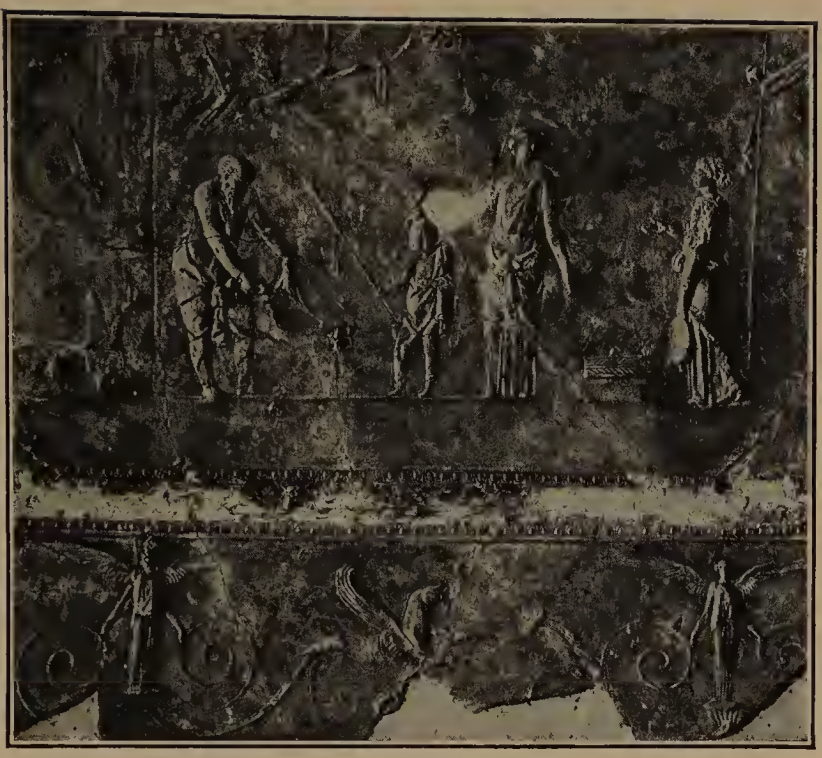
2.

XXV. 1. "Bacchic sacrifice." 2. "Bacchic sacrifice in the presence of a drunken Silenus and a veiled woman." *Stucco bas-reliefs. Corners of the ceiling of room No. 3 of the Farnesina house.* MUSEO DELLE TERME, ROME.

that they were themselves initiated into the Dionysiac and perhaps also the Eleusinian mysteries.

The impression which we derive from the decoration of the Farnesina house that Eleusinian and Dionysiac ideas figured prominently in the religious conceptions of the intellectuals of the First Century A. D. is confirmed by the evidence of a body of archaeological material which has been recently carefully collected, classified, and dated by H. von Rohden but not yet studied as a group with reference to the religious tendencies of the Augustan age. I mean the architectonic plaques which were used extensively in the early imperial times to adorn the roofs and the walls of houses, villas and graves of the city of Rome and of some minor Italian cities (none has been found outside of Italy).[3] All of them are adorned with fine bas-reliefs. Some of these reliefs are merely ornamental. A large part, however, treat mythological subjects, scenes of daily life being exceptional and late. The mythological and ritual scenes reproduced on the reliefs of which I am speaking are taken exclusively from the repertory of Greek religion. Oriental gods and Oriental rites are missing (I know of only one bas-relief which represents Egyptian priests). Among the Greek religious subjects, those derived from the



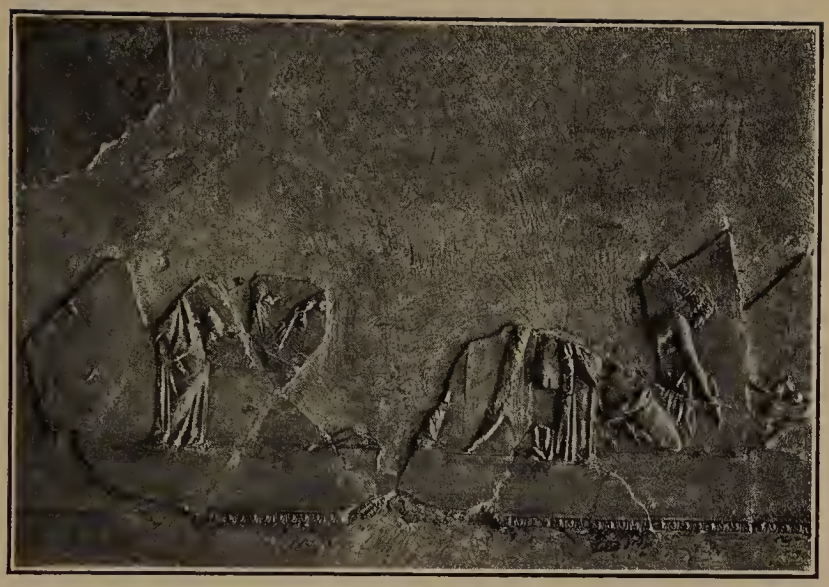
1.

2.

XXVI. 1. "Sacred rite performed by a Satyr and a Maenad over the figure of little Dionysus." 2. "Initiation of the boy Dionysus into his own mysteries by the Silenus and two Maenads." *Stucco bas-reliefs. Corners of the ceiling of room No. 4 of the Farnesina house.* MUSEO DELLE TERME, ROME.

Eleusinian and Dionysiac mysteries occupy a very conspicuous place. There are at least two sets of plaques which are Eleusinian, and three or more which refer to the rites and ideas of the Dionysiac mysteries, quite apart from reproductions of common Dionysiac themes which have become almost purely decorative. I have used these plaques in the preceding chapter in explaining various paintings of the Villa Item and the "Homeric" house. It is a happy suggestion on the part of H. von Rohden that the plaques with Eleusinian and Dionysiac subjects belonged originally to sets or series which reproduced sequences of Eleusinian and Dionysiac rites and symbols exactly in the same way as did the decoration of the Dionysiac rooms in the Villa Item, in the "Homeric" house and in the Villa Farnesina. These reliefs certainly testify that the Eleusinian and Dionysiac mysteries enjoyed high favor among the upper classes of Italy in the First Century A. D.

Along with Demeter and Dionysus, the Pythagorean Apollo was a god who loomed large in the religious ideas of the aristocracy of Rome at this time. For the sober and puritanical Roman aristocrats with their venerable traditions of respectability and moderation the Dionysiac mysteries were too ecstatic and too emotional. Their an-



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XXVII. 1. "Bacchanal." 2. "Revelation of the phallus in the liknon." *Stucco bas-reliefs. Corners of the ceiling of room No. 4 of the Farnesina house.* MUSEO DELLE TERME, ROME.

cestors had condemned them in the famous *senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus*. Much more attractive to them was the stern and lofty Pythagorean religious philosophy. This is not the place for a full presentation of the Pythagorean creed, as we know it mostly from later sources, dating from the time of its last revival, the time of the great struggle between Christianity and the most spiritual of the so-called pagan religions. What we know of it is easily accessible in the excellent books of Delatte, Cumont and Carcopino. It is necessary, however, to point out some of the outstanding features of the Pythagorean creed in order to explain its enormous vogue among the highly educated members of the Roman aristocracy of the First Century A. D.

Like the other religions of Salvation, Pythagoreanism centered its teaching around the great, the all important question of the after life. Myths, however, played no part in this religion. It was a cosmic, philosophical, not mythological conception. The Savior of the Pythagoreans was not the ecstatic sufferer Dionysus but the great god of Harmony, the luminous god of the celestial spheres—Apollo. He promised help and salvation to those who succeeded in throwing off the earthly part of their human essence and freeing

XXVIII. Two views of the Basilica of the Porta Maggiore; to the left the entrance, to the right the apse. ROME.

their soul, the spiritual part of their being, from the domination of passions and of materialistic needs—who knew how during their life on the earth to achieve the highest possible degree of harmony. The body is the grave of the soul (Soma—Sema). By meticulous purifications, by meditation, by contemplation of visions of spiritual life, by abstinence, by moderation, by virtuous, blameless living, man may achieve during his lifetime such a degree of harmony that after his death, perhaps after many deaths following many reincarnations, he may be admitted at last to the celestial spheres, where harmony and Apollo reign supreme, to the eternal abode of purified souls.

It is easy to understand why and how this lofty, moderate, spiritual, philosophical religion attracted so many of the members of the higher Roman aristocracy and made itself such a powerful rival of Dionysiac mysteries. How powerful was the spell of this religion on the higher classes of the city of Rome is shown by the second Roman monument which I have mentioned above—the "basilica" of the Porta Maggiore. Let me give a brief description of this building.[4]

The so-called "basilica" of the Porta Maggiore was discovered by chance in 1917, during the Great War (pl. XXVIII). There can be no doubt

that this subterranean building was a shrine, a place of worship and prayer, a place where a small community of mystae held its meetings. It is one of the most striking and most enigmatic monuments ever discovered in the rich soil of the eternal city of Rome. Since its discovery scores of books and articles dealing with the basilica have been published not only in Italy but in other European countries and in America. Opinions on the purpose and the meaning of the building and on its decoration are still divided, even since the publication of Prof. J. Carcopino's new and excellent book on this subject. There is general agreement, however, on one essential point. Nobody believes, as I had been inclined to believe for a short time, that the building was a hall for recreation or recitations, belonging to one of the luxurious villas of the Roman suburbs. The architectural features of the building, the fact that it was constructed far below the surface of the earth, the evidence that a sacrifice was performed in the apse at the time of its dedication, the religious character of its furniture, and finally the character of its decoration, every detail of which shows that the main preoccupation of the men who planned the decoration was the crucial question of life and death in its mystic aspect, prove that the building was a religious and

not a secular one, a place of devotion and not of rest and amusement.

Opinions are still divided on whether it was the place of worship of a mystic sect or a funeral shrine connected with a grave or a group of graves, though clearly not a sepulchre itself. Another still unsolved question is whether the shrine should be ascribed to a definite sect or merely to a group of men whose mysticism was more inclusive and general. Since the publication of Carcopino's book, it seems very attractive to assume that the basilica was built by a prominent member of the higher Roman aristocracy of the time of the Emperor Claudius, a man who is mentioned in the history of the time as a victim of Messalina and Claudius, the senator T. Statilius Taurus, for the use of a small group of Pythagoreans. The Pythagorean basilica was not long in use. It was still unfinished when it was abandoned, robbed of its furniture and filled with earth. The end of the building was probably violent and may be connected with the sad end of its owner, the victim of a political persecution.

However that may be, the building and its decoration are of such a character that they let us look deep into the mystic aspirations of the higher

classes of Rome in the First Century A. D. Let me take you into this building for a moment.

An easy modern staircase leads from the surface of the earth into an underground building of basilical form. In the ancient times the approach was otherwise. Those who desired to penetrate into the basilica entered a narrow corridor gradually sloping down, which ran parallel to one of the sides of the basilica, then turned to the left and then to the left again into the door of entrance. The basilica consisted of two rooms: a small anteroom and a large main room. Illuminated by a narrow light well, the main room impresses the visitor by its heavy pillars, its narrow and deep nave and aisles, and its mysterious apse with the great picture which covers its semicircular half cupola. In front of the apse stood probably an altar; near the pillars which support the richly decorated vaults in the nave were bases supporting sacrificial vases, and in the aisles were marble tables. All this furniture has disappeared but has left its traces in the pavement of the building.

Without artificial light little could be seen of the rich stucco decoration of the walls, the pillars and the vaults of the main room of the basilica. Imagine, however, a set of candelabra lighted dur-

ing a ceremonial performance—a mystic mass. One becomes aware at once how impressive and mysterious the decoration must have seemed. Beautiful landscapes of religious character adorned the dadoes of the walls; they represent an old tree, a sacred enclosure, a fetish in the center of this enclosure, and near by (or instead of the fetish) a marble statue of the god or goddess. Are these landscapes rustic sanctuaries, as I personally believe them to be, or, as Carcopino has suggested, graves of men and heroes? If they are graves, we may accept the further suggestion of Carcopino that they are meant to symbolize a favorite idea of the Pythagoreans, that the body is the prison of the soul and its grave, human life being practically death, while real life begins when one's body, soma, is no more a grave, sema. Above these landscapes, over the pillars are large figures of men and women on pedestals in the attitude of prayer or of recitation, and along with them, or alternating with them, sacrificial tables on which sacred vases and mystical symbols are displayed (pl. XXIX, 1). On the surface of the pillars are portraits of men and women—members of the mystic sect, or its prophets and founders.

Most imposing and impressive was, however,

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XXIX. 1. Sacrificial table. 2. Revelation of the liknon. *Stucco bas-reliefs.* BASILICA OF THE PORTA MAGGIORE, ROME.

the decoration of the vaults with its amazing wealth of pictures, small and large, all conveying the simple but powerful ideas of the futility of life, of the mystery of death which surrounds man, and of the liberating effect of mystic initiation and of mystic teaching, which promise eternal salvation after death and in life itself freedom from fear and anxiety in the face of death. I cannot undertake to enumerate and to interpret all these pictures. The variety of subjects and the hidden symbolical meaning of each scene, combined with our limited knowledge of the mystic religions, makes the task of explaining and coordinating the pictures very difficult and even in some cases hopeless.

Nevertheless, it appears, and Carcopino was the first to show it, that the subjects of the pictures may be divided into several groups, all referring in one way or another to the leading ideas of the mystic creeds as stated above. One group gives the history of a human being before initiation: his babyhood, his childhood, his education, his training in the gymnasium and palaestra ending with the greatest mystery of human life—marriage, often compared by the mystics with the mystery of initiation. Initiation was to them the great sacred wedding of the spiritual life, and

the uninitiate (*amuetoi*) were likened to the unwed (*agamoi*).

The second group shows in symbolical pictures the fate of those who never cared for initiation, or remained half initiated, or betrayed the mystery of initiation: the pygmies in their ridiculous futile daily occupations represent those who never think of death and who care for material welfare only —those to whom religion is but silly magic and self-delusion; the Danaids who endeavor to fill with water a jar full of holes personify the futile endeavors of men who never knew the truth; Marsyas, who dared to challenge Apollo, the great god of wisdom and light, is the half-initiated who in his pride challenges the real mystic wisdom, and finally Pentheus, the great sinner, the initiated who knew the truth and betrayed it, suffers for his crime horrible death at the hands of his mother Agave who, in her turn, is cruelly punished.

Next comes the initiate. We follow, in various pictures, his education, effected by reading and discussing the sacred books, the *hieroi logoi;* we see him performing sacred rites, and finally, in symbols, his initiation to the higher wisdom, similar to that of the greatest *mysta*—Herakles.

Plates XXIX, 2 and XXX, 1 and 2 reproduce three interesting stucco bas-reliefs which show the

connection of the Pythagorean mysteries with the Bacchic and Eleusinian. Plate XXIX, 2 represents a Dionysiac priestess who reveals to a seated woman or man the mystery of the liknon. In plate XXX, 1 a woman seated in a chair reads the sacred book to a girl or woman who holds in her hand a cornear, a well known Eleusinian symbol. And finally, in plate XXX, 2 we see a seated woman with an expression of eagerness reading from a roll in the presence of a Maenad. No doubt all these three scenes illustrate the close connection which existed between the various religions of Salvation in the First Century A. D.

The culminating point, however, is death. What will be the fate of the initiate after death? In beautiful mythological pictures the initiate is assured that finally he will become a god; he will be rescued from the pains and sufferings of human life and after a long voyage will reach the luminous spheres of eternal harmony. These symbolical mythological pictures are as follows. Herakles, the great *mysta*, and Hesione whom he saved from the terrible dragon, this last symbolizing probably life on earth; Jason and Medea, the great initiated hero who after a long and difficult voyage with the help of personified mystic wisdom (Medea) achieves the luminous truth (the

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XXX. 1. Reading of the sacred book to a figure of the Eleusinian cycle. 2. Reading of the sacred book to a Maenad. *Stucco bas-reliefs.* BASILICA OF THE PORTA MAGGIORE, ROME.

golden fleece, guarded by the eternal serpent); Paris and Helen, the sacred love and the holy wedding; Ulysses and Helen, the great mystic sage who received from the hands of Helen, the luminous daughter of Zeus, the "Palladion", the symbol of everlasting wisdom. All these pictures look toward the final apotheosis of the soul liberated by wisdom and initiation. We see in the central part of the vault how this soul is carried away by gods to heaven, to the seat of eternal harmony: Ganymede and Zeus (pl. XXXI, 2), the Leucippids and the heavenly stars—the Dioscuri.

The picture, however, which chiefly attracts the attention of the visitor is that of the apse, a beautiful composition indeed (pl. XXXI, the right half of the apse bas-relief with the figure of Sappho). Rocks in the sea. On one, the beautiful erect figure of Apollo, extending his right hand towards a girl who is standing on the top of another rock ready to plunge into the sea, guided and gently urged by the god of love. In the sea, Tritons and Nereids (or Sirens) ready to help the girl and to receive her. The extreme left corner is occupied by a young man in deep sorrow, seated, looking at the scene of the plunge. There has been much speculation about the meaning of this picture. By joint efforts of many scholars: Cu-

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XXXI. 1. Sappho taking the sacred leap. *Right part of the stucco bas-reliefs of the apse.* 2. Ganymede carried to the heaven by the Divine Eagle. *Center of the vault.* BASILICA OF THE PORTA MAGGIORE, ROME.

mont, Curtis, Bendinelli, Lietzmann, Msr. Strong, Hubaux, Kerelyi, Zielinski, the problem has been solved. The picture coincides in all the essential points with the fifteenth Heroid of Ovid, in which he describes the leap of Sappho from the Leucadian rock. Neither Ovid nor our picture represents the vulgar tradition of the suicide of the poetess, betrayed in her love to Phaon. Their conception is much loftier. Sappho does not intend to commit suicide. She is putting her fate into the hands of the great god of light and wisdom, Apollo. Her earthly love of Phaon is an obstacle to her sacred union with Apollo. By the mystic leap into the sea, by a ritual death, her immortal part is to be purified and made ready for her divine bridegroom—the god of light, Apollo. The beautiful painting was an eloquent symbol for the mystae who gathered in the underground basilica.

The "basilica" of the Porta Maggiore is of course unique in its kind. No other monument of the ancient world, not even those of Pompeii described in the preceding chapter or the Farnesina house dealt with in the first part of this chapter, reflects the mystic aspirations of the early Roman Empire more fully and more expressly. Whether we accept or reject the idea of Cumont and of Carcopino that the decoration of the basi-

lica is Pythagorean without admixture, that at least is obvious to every student of ancient religion.

The basilica does not stand alone in its testimony. Scores of other monuments of the city of Rome reflect the same ideas and tendencies, although some of them are more Eleusinian in their general conception, like the beautiful sarcophagus of Torre Nuova,[5] and some are evidently Dionysiac and to a certain extent Orphic, like the Farnesina house described above. In connection with that house I may mention a recently discovered inscription which shows how deeply involved in Dionysiac rites and speculations was one part at least of the aristocracy of Rome, especially those new nobles from the Orient who were admitted to the narrow circle of the old Roman aristocracy through the efforts of Julius Caesar and Augustus and of their immediate successors. I mean the inscription of Julia Agripinilla of the Flavian times, a descendant of the famous Theophanes of Lesbos, friend of Caesar.[6] It appears from this inscription, shortly to be published by Prof. Vogliano, that Agripinilla was the head of a Dionysiac *thiasos* or *speira* whose dignitaries and members are all enumerated in the inscription. Most of the members of the *thiasos* belonged to the household of Agripinilla, yet there are among

them not only slaves and freedmen of the aristocratic lady but friends and acquaintances also.

Though mysticism is rife, pure Eleusinian, Dionysiac, Orphic, or Pythagorean ideas are rather exceptional in the monuments of art of the post-Augustan age. The sharp dividing lines between the various branches of Greek mysteries were gradually vanishing in the early Roman Empire. A kind of mystic "Koine" was slowly forming, and into this common mystic language many foreign elements were introduced, especially from the Orient. This mystic "Koine" is reflected in scores and hundreds of monuments of the late First, the Second and the early Third Centuries after Christ, the quiet and somnolent time of the ripe Roman Empire. Let me quote some of them, just a few examples. An exhaustive treatment would lead me too far.

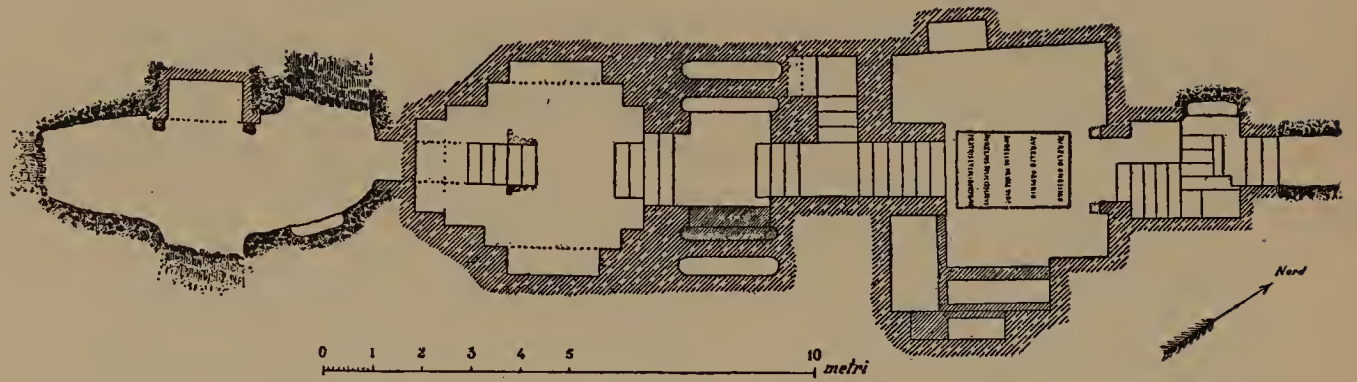
As one would expect, the graves and everything connected therewith display in words and in images the mystic ideas and conceptions of the residents of Rome. The funeral inscriptions recently investigated by F. Cumont [7] are full of expressions taken from the mystic Koine of the time; there is hardly one which entirely lacks mystic elements in its stereotyped formulas. Still more eloquent are the decorations of the grave monuments:

the pictorial and sculptural decorations of the Mausolaea and grave chambers, the bas-reliefs of the sarcophagi, of the funeral urns, and of the grave stelai, etc. They have never been collected and investigated from this point of view. And yet one glance at the paintings and stuccoes of the graves on the Via Latina [8] or those of the Villa Pamfilj (the most interesting one has been recently transferred to the basement of the Museo delle Terme),[9] at the gorgeous paintings of the sepulchral chamber of the Nasonii so brutally destroyed,[10] or at the charming pictures of the recently discovered grave of one of the many families of Aurelii of the Second and Third Centuries with the figure of a little child in the Elysian fields,[11] will show how thoroughly mystic ideas permeated current conceptions of the future life.

A most brilliant example of the mystic "Koine", as expressed in pictures of grave monuments is presented by the well known but little studied decorations of the grave of Vincentius and Vibia.[12] In a series of pictures the full story of Vibia's soul is told to the visitor of her grave chamber. The soul is carried away like a new Proserpina by Pluto or Hades, the god of the underworld, she is conveyed to the nether world by Mercury, stands her last trial before the tribunal of Dis-

pater and Aerecura, the king and the queen of the nether world, is led as a new Alkestis to a group of pious men, and finally takes part in the eternal banquet of the blessed in the Elysian fields. From the inscription of the grave and a fresco which represents her husband holding a funeral banquet in her memory in the company of the other dignitaries of the sect to which both husband and wife belonged, we know that Vibia believed in the great Thracian god Sabazios and was one of his *mystae*. But how near are the ideas of the Sabaziasts to those of the Eleusinian, Dionysiac, Orphic and Pythagorean mystae! In this period, it is clear, all the mystic religions speak a common language. And among the mystery religions Christianity is not an exception.

I do not propose to deal here with the vocabulary, the rites, and the ideas of the early Christian religion. This side of the problem has been repeatedly and thoroughly investigated by theologians and students of the history of early Christianity. It is not my task, either, to present and analyze all the archaeological evidence, both Christian and pagan, which shows the mutual interpenetration of Christianity and mystic religions and the establishment of a common stock of ideas and images.[13] I wish merely to conclude my

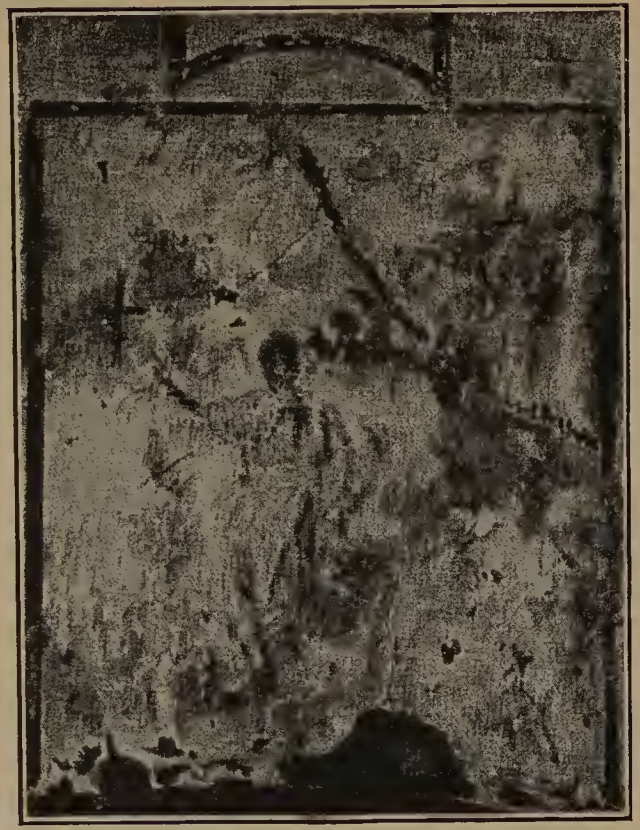


XXXII. Plan of the family grave in Viale Manzoni. ROME.

treatment of Mystic Rome by adducing two recently discovered monuments which show better than any other instances how divergent and uncanonical were some of the Christian groups and how full their ideas were of the mystic Koine of the time.

Let me begin with two graves recently excavated under the church of S. Sebastiano, where the cult of St. Peter and St. Paul was so prominent in the later period.[14] Not the slightest motive reveals the Christian character of one of these graves. The beautiful decoration (vine scrolls) is perfectly neutral! Look at the decoration of the second grave: a sacred banquet, the funeral of a man, his last trial before a judge dressed like a Roman magistrate, his apotheosis among a group of his friends. Not one motive is here which does not occur in the other graves of the period; for example, the grave of Vibia or the graves of the Via Latina. And yet the figure of the Good Shepherd shows that the buried man was probably a Christian!

Far more original is the decoration of another grave-monument, the sepulchre of a family whose members after the edict of Caracalla assumed the family name—Aurelius (pl. XXXII). It is in the Viale Manzoni, and dates from the Third Cen-



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XXXIII. 1. The prophet pointing to the cross. 2. One of the eleven apostles. *Fresco. Family grave.* VIALE MANZONI, ROME.

tury A. D.[15] The imposing funeral monument on the surface of the earth, the richly adorned upper story, the two underground rooms of various levels with many important changes in later periods as later burials were made show that the sepulchre was probably used not only by a family but by a larger community whose members liked to lie buried near the original chambers of the Aurelii. It was probably the sacred burial place of a sect, like the orthodox Christian catacombs. There is no doubt that the sect was Christian. This is shown by the scenes illustrating the history of the creation of man in the upper room, by the figures of the Good Shepherd on the ceilings of the underground chambers, and by a modest cross in the anteroom with a figure of a prophet pointing to it (pl. XXXIII, 1).

Christians, yes! But how far were these Christians orthodox? The three or four rooms of the earlier catacomb are adorned with beautiful frescoes in a new impressionistic style. A great artist painted this room, one who knew how to tell a dramatic story, how to convey deep religious ideas by means of new compositions, not borrowed from the age-old repertory of mythical scenes, and how to surround all this by the charm and the poetry of an attractive landscape painted with love and

understanding. It is a pity that nobody as yet has endeavored to analyze these pictures from the artistic point of view. It is not easy, but for that reason all the more attractive and important. I know of few monuments which are so full of novelties from the point of view of the history of art.

However, it is not this task which is ours in this essay. My task is to explain these pictures and to understand their mystic content. The question is arduous indeed. We know so little of the orthodox Christian faith of the early times. How much less we know of those currents of half-Christian thought which were discarded and condemned by the growing orthodox church! The various gnostic sects are but a shadow in our tradition, which is little more than a caricature of some of them drawn by their enemies and antagonists, the fathers of the orthodox church. This is the reason why nobody as yet has succeeded in giving a full explanation of the frescoes.

One point, however, is evident. The frescoes certainly reflect the sacred books of one of the gnostic sects. This has been shown by the analysis of the pictures of the upper room. The painter endeavored to represent here the main theological ideas of the sect. The significant part of the

decoration is two pictures, both on the same wall, which represent the creation of man and the episode of Adam and Eve—their conversation with the serpent. We know how important these episodes were in the early gnostic teachings, how essential their interpretation was for some gnostic sects. The mystic "gnosis", the wisdom, of these Christians was based on the revelation which the serpent disclosed to our forefathers. To emphasize the basic importance of these two episodes for the sect, the painter filled the two other walls of the room with two majestic compositions: each one represents the glorious temple of wisdom and before it in the two corners two teachers or prophets. One is dictating the great revelations of the new creed, the interpretation of the two biblical episodes, to his colleague or pupil, the other is interpreting this revelation to a pupil of his.

Still more difficult to understand and to interpret is the decoration of the main underground room. On the walls of this room eleven life-size figures of standing men, all wonderful portraits, surround one when one enters the room (pl. XXXIII, 2). Earnest looking men with expressive features—teachers, prophets, apostles—who knows? And above, a long story is told in a series

XXXIV. Christ (?) in the desert and his flock. *Fresco. Family grave.* VIALE MANZONI, ROME.

of amazing pictures. A man reading a book in the wilderness of mountains among twelve (?) sheep and goats (pl. XXXIV); the fervor of his faith is depicted on his face. A triumphant ride of a hero on horseback, followed by a crowd and greeted by a deputation of the citizens of a beautiful city. A man preaching in a gymnasium in a big city, and across the road a beautiful "paradise" —a garden surrounded by high walls. A group of men moving slowly in an orderly procession. A banquet with twelve participants. And last a fine rustic landscape and a mysterious scene of three naked men approaching a majestic woman standing near her loom and a seated bearded man to whom both the three young men and the woman eagerly listen.

Many explanations of the story have been suggested. The true one seems to be as follows. It is the history of a new Christian sect: the teacher in the desert suggests Christ among his apostles but need not be Christ himself. After deep meditation he reveals himself to the residents of a city. It need not be one of the cities of the Roman Empire. It is the abstract city, the "civitas" of Augustine, the divine city of the initiated. In the city the new faith is preached and the Aurelii become converted to it. They see before them the

promised paradise and imagine themselves living there after their death. However, they must first be initiated. And now we see how the three new mystae are instructed and initiated by the prophet of the new faith and the mother of the new *synodos* represented under the features of the mythical wise beggar, Ulysses, and his faithful and clever wife, Penelope. The new community fervently begins its work of preaching and teaching —the eleven prophets on the walls. In the next room they are taking part in the great eternal sacred meal, and above them float the figures of prophets and teachers.

Are they real Christians, these men? We see no trace of the orthodox Gospel. A gospel is preached, to be sure, but it is not our Gospel!

NOTES

NOTES

Chapter I

I have no recollection of having read any book or substantial article on the history of the relations between religion and science in the ancient world. Remarks on the subject are to be found in the best histories of Greek Religion, Philosophy and Science. It is hardly necessary to name those works here. Any who may care for a select bibliography may refer to my History of the Ancient World, vol. I, 1926, p. 404f.

Chapter II

1) On the mystery religions in general: K. H. E. de Jong, *Das antike Mysterienwesen*, 2 ed., 1919; R. Petazzoni, *I misteri*, 1924; N. Turchi, *Le religioni misteriosofiche del mondo antico*, 1923, and the bibliographies in the useful books of S. Angus, *The Mystery-religions and Christianity*, 1924, and A. Boulanger, *Orphée*, 1925, Introduction, p. 10. On the Eleusinian mysteries: P. Foucart, *Les mystères d'Eleusis*, 1914; M. J.

Lagrange, *Les mystères d'Eleusis*, 1919, and M. Brillant, *Les mystères d'Eleusis*, 1920. Compare F. Noack, *Eleusis*, 1927. On Orphism the book of A. Boulanger quoted above (with excellent bibliography up to date). On Pythagoreanism: S. Reinach, *Lettres à Zoé*, 1926, vol. I; Rostagni, *Il verbo di Pitagora*, 1924, and the bibliography in J. Carcopino, *La Basilique Pythagoricienne de la Porte Majeure*, 1927, p. 391f.

2) On the cults of South Italy in general and on the cults of Campania in particular see G. Gianelli, *Culti e miti della Magna Grecia*, 1924, and R. M. Peterson, "The cults of Campania", *Papers and Monographs of the Amer. Ac. in Rome*, vol. I, 1919. Pompeii and Herculaneum are treated by Peterson on p. 222ff., ch. V. To the cult of Dionysus and Bacchus the author devotes half a page (p. 239) in the section "Pompeii" and no space at all in the section "Herculaneum". He does not mention the Villa Item. On the cults of Etruria: L. R. Taylor, "Local cults in Etruria", *Papers and Monographs of the Amer. Ac. in Rome*, vol. II, 1923. Orphic influences on the Etruscan religion: C. C. van Essen, *Did Orphic influence on Etruscan tomb paintings exist?* Amsterdam, 1927 (in this book the reader will find also an analysis of the Orphic tablets,

with bibliography). Vases of South Italy with representations of the nether world, H. Haus, *Bilderatlas zur Religionsgeschichte*, Lief. 9-11, Leipzig, 1926, Nos. 174ff. The inscription of the Bacchic cemetery: *Monumenti Antichi dell' Acc. dei Lincei*, 22, 1913, p. 573ff., *:οὐ θέμις ἐνταῦθα κεῖδθαι εἰ μὲ (-μὴ) τὸν βεβαχχευμένον* (the two last references come from F. Cumont). The Megarian ware of Italy and the Arretine pottery with Dionysiac subjects: Megarian bowl or rather goblet with the triumphal procession of Dionysus whose chariot is followed by Herakles and Apollo, with some Dionysiac rites (revelation of the vannus mystica, the story of the education of the child Dionysus, initiation of two Satyrs, sacrifice of Silenus) P. Orsi, *Notizie degli Scavi*, 1913, p. 271, fig. 13; Walters, *British Museum Catalogue of pottery*, IV, p. 251, pl. XV. On the Arretine pottery and the early terra sigillata see the well known books of Chase and Dechelette. Nobody, as far as I know, has tried to collect the information on the cult of Dionysus and on the Dionysiac mysteries which may be found in the bas-reliefs of the Arretine pottery and of the "terra sigillata". On the Calenian dishes see R. Pagenstecher, "Die Calenische Reliefkeramik", *Jahrb. des Deutschen Arch. Insti-*

tuts, Ergänzungsheft, 8, 1909, and on the pottery with reliefs in general, F. Courby, "Les vases Grecs à relief", 1922 (*Bibl. des Ecoles Fr.,* vol. 125, p. 167ff.). I may point out in this connection that the Greek bas-relief pottery which begins with the Fourth Century B. C. and predominates in the Hellenistic and the early Roman period of ancient history makes extensive use of religious subjects to adorn its products. It is interesting to note that in the Hellenistic and in the early Roman period the mythological repertory of the bas-relief pottery is exclusively Greek and that in this repertory mythological scenes and to some extent scenes representing ritual acts connected with the Greek mystery religions loom large. Note that most of this pottery was produced in Italy and later in the Latin speaking provinces. Compare my remarks in chapter III regarding the architectonic terra cottas of the early imperial times. On the recent excavations of the Sibyllan cave of Cumae see A. Maiuri, *Not. d. Scavi,* 1926, p. 85ff.

3) On the mystic religions in the Hellenistic period see the short remarks in the most recent histories of the Hellenistic period, J. Kaerst, *Geschichte des Hellenismus,* 2 ed., vol. II, 1926, p. 168ff., and J. Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte,*

3 ed., vol. IV, 1, 1925, p. 433ff., compare K. Latte, "Religiöse Strömungen in der Frühzeit des Hellenismus" in *Die Antike*, 1, 1925, p. 146ff. In these surveys, however, attention is paid mostly to the "new" phenomena of the Hellenistic age: the cult of the kings, the worship of "Tyche", the Hellenized Oriental cults, especially those of Sarapis and Isis and that of Adonis, the rationalistic Euhemeristic tendencies, and the like. The enormous importance of the mystery religions of this period, religions which permeated all the new and old aspects of religious life, is very little realized. An exception is the brilliant Russian book of T. Zielinski, *The religion of the Hellenistic period*, S. Petersburg, 1922, p. 13ff.; compare the same author's *La Sibylle*, 1924, p. 59ff. The Hellenistic mystery religions are treated mostly in connection with early Christianity. The bibliography is readily accessible in the excellent book of S. Angus, *The mystery-religions and Christianity*, 1924. On the mysteries of Dionysus in the Hellenistic and Roman period see the excellent new chapter in F. Cumont, *Les religions orientales*, new French edition, 1928; compare O. Kern, *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, 22, 1924, p. 198f., and H. Willrich, *l. l.*, 24, 1926, p. 170ff. (Dionysus in Jerusalem). The

gradual moralization of Greek religion under the influence of the mystery religions is brilliantly illustrated by an inscription recently found in Philadelphia in Asia Minor; see O. Weinreich, "Stiftung und Kultsatzungen eines Privatheiligtums in Philadelphia in Lydien", *Sitzungsb. dez Heidelberger Akademie*, 1919, No. 16. On the Eleusinian mysteries, Orphism, and Pythagoreanism in the Hellenistic and early Roman period see the notes to the next chapter.

4) The reflection of the Greek mystery religions in the monuments of Pompeii and Herculaneum and especially in the mural paintings of these cities has never been studied. As far as mural decoration is concerned the material is collected in the well known books of Helbig and Sogliano and in the *Répertoire des peintures* of S. Reinach. The more recent finds are published in the reports on the excavations of Pompeii in the *Notizie degli Scavi* (fuller and better reports were given by A. Mau in the *Römische Mittheilungen*). However, a study of mystic influences of Pompeii must not be confined to the mural paintings. It must be extended to the small bronzes, the terra cottas, and the decoration of the various arms, weapons and utensils, including the pottery and the metal vases. How instructive this

material is may be shown, e. g., by the fresco from Herculaneum, Helbig, No. 578, Reinach, p. 118, No. 1, with a full set of musical instruments used in Dionysiac mysteries; compare the fresco with a set of Dionysiac implements and offerings, Helbig, Nos. 409, 577, 579, Reinach, p. 118, Nos. 2-4. Still more instructive are the two friezes of a decoration of the third style. One shows scattered Dionysiac groups. Note the interesting group showing the reading of the "hieros logos". The other shows a Bacchic sacrifice performed by a priest and a priestess in a rustic Dionysiac sanctuary, Helbig, No. 569; *Museo Borbonico*, VIII, 18; Reinach, p. 119, 4-9. On the frescoes of Boscoreale: F. Studniczka, "Imagines illustrium" in *Jahrb. d. D. Arch. Inst.*, 38-39, 1923-1924, p. 64ff., pl. II and III, with full bibliography. Compare my remarks on the gladiatorial helmet at the end of this chapter.

5) On the "villa of the mysteries" and its pictures see V. Macchioro, *Zagreus*, Bari, 1920; E. G. Rizzo, "Dionysos Mystes" in *Memorie d. Acc. di Napoli*, 1918; E. Pottier in *Rev. Arch.*, 1915, vol. II, p. 321ff., and S. Reinach, *Répertoire de peintures*, p. 115. In these books and articles the reader will find a full bibliography of what has been written on the "Villa mystica".

Very useful is the little guide of V. Macchioro, *The Villa of the Mysteries in Pompei*, Naples. The excellent plate of this publication which gives the sequence of the various scenes in splendid photographs is most useful. The photographs published here (pl. III) were made in Pompeii last summer for my personal use. They show the distribution of the paintings on the walls and the general character of the decoration. To study the various pictures the reader must recur to the publications mentioned above and the books and articles cited in them. Alinari, Anderson, and Sommer all have excellent photos of the frescoes of the Villa Item.

6) P. Herrmann, *Denkmäler der Malerei des Altertums*, pl. 3: bride, bride-maid, attendants of the sacrifice, sacrificial table with myrtle branches. As regards the scene of the divination I may note that divination (in love affairs) by means of a "lekane" is represented on a mosaic of Dioscorides now in the Museum of Naples (*Jahrb. des Arch. Inst.* 26, 1911, p. 1ff).

7) H. von Rohden und H. Winnefeld, *Die Antiken Terrakotten*, vol. IV, 1: "Architektonische Römische Tonreliefs der Kaiserzeit", 1911, p. 52ff.; E. G. Rizzo, "Dionysos Mystes" in *Mem.*

d. R. Acc. di Arch. di Napoli, 3, 1918, p. 81, fig. 21; p. 82, fig. 22, and p. 83, fig. 23.

8) H. von Rohden, *ibid.*, p. 56ff., and pl. 139, 2 (Hanover). The plaque which I reproduce (pl. V) is in the Louvre. Compare E. G. Rizzo, *l. l.*, p. 58, fig. 12, p. 59, fig. 13, and p. 57, fig. 11. He also gives the reproduction of the stucco reliefs of the Farnesina house, p. 48f., figs. 8 and 9.

9) The figure of Telete (with inscription) is reproduced on a well known Greek bas-relief, Roscher, *Lexicon*, vol. III, 2, p. 2124, fig. 12. The Telete of the bas-relief has no wings.

10) The discovery of this house (Reg. I, ins. VI, No. 2) and of the cryptoporticus is mentioned in *Not. d. Scavi*, 1914, p. 179ff. (with a partial map) and p. 197ff., p. 200ff. and p. 227ff., cf. *ibid.*, p. 257ff. and p. 315ff. No report of the progress of the excavations of the "Homeric" house has been published since, and no map of the house. The beautiful decoration, in the second style, of one of the rooms of the next house, a house which probably formed originally a part of the "Homeric" house, was described (without reproduction) in *Not. d. Sc.*, 1913, p. 356f. The decoration of this room (large life-size figures) recalls the paintings of the Villa Item. The subject is enigmatic. The two white elephants with

Amors on their backs symbolize, like the well known figures of an old and a young Centaur, the irresistible power of love. But who are the two majestic seated women? I am inclined to compare them with the seated woman of the Boscoreale frescoes which I have mentioned above and shall take up again presently.

11) The kitchen of the temple of Malachbel, *C. I. L.*, vol. III, 7954. Cenatoria and triclinia of Jupiter Dolichenus, *C. I. L.*, vol. III, 4789; vol. VI, 30931; vol. XI, 696.

12) Vatican, Sala dei Candelabri, No. 198. W. Helbig-W. Amelung, *Führer*, I, p. 244, No. 379; S. Reinach, *Rep. d. reliefs*, III, p. 358, 1. Compare O. Waser, *Charon, Charun, Charos*, 1898, p. 124, No. 41 and p. 104ff. (the Attic le kythoi).

13) Villa of N. Popidius Florus, M. Della Corte, *Not. d. Sc.*, 1921, p. 447f., fig. 14.

14) C. C. van Essen, *Did Orphic influence on Etruscan tomb paintings exist?* p. 15ff.

15) C. C. van Essen, *l. l.*, p. 37ff.

16) Compare the picture of Admetus and Alkestis of which six copies have been found at Pompeii and Herculaneum, P. Herrmann, *Denkmäler der Maleri*, pls. 13, 84 and 85. The composition of this painting is very similar to that of

the picture of the "Homeric" house which I have described in the text, especially the figure supposed to be Admetus. The interpretation of the picture as Admetus and Alkestis has been challenged by many scholars: K. Dissel, "Der Mythos of Admetus und Alkestis", *Gymnasialpr. Brandenburg*, 1882, p. 13; W. Engelmann in Roscher, *Lexicon*, vol. I, 1, p. 235; C. Robert, *Archaeologische Hermeneutik*, 1919, p. 389ff., figs. 289-290. However, no better interpretation has been suggested as yet.

17) F. Studniczka, *Jahrb. d. D. Arch. Inst.*, 38-39, 1923-1924, p. 64ff., pls. II and III.

18) The pictures of the corridor I of the Farnesina house are reproduced in Lessing-Mau, *Wand- und Deckenschmuck*, etc. (see next chapter, note 2), pl. I; *Mon. Inediti*, XII, pls. 28-34. An attempt at interpreting the pictures of the corridor has been made by A. Mau, *Annali dell' Instituto*, 1885, p. 317ff., and recently, in connection with the interpretation of the frescoes of the Villa Item, by E. G. Rizzo in *Memorie d. R. Acc. di Arch. di Napoli*, 3, 1918. Some of the pictures of the corridor are reproduced in text figures of this publication: p. 40, fig. 7, initiation of the boy Dionysus; p. 69, fig. 15, revelation of the sacred book or tablet; p. 75, fig. 20, Dionysus

in the lap of his divine consort; p. 88, fig. 25, initiation into the mystery of death.

19) B. Nogara, *Pitture del Vaticano, pl.* 49; A. Dietrich, *Sommertag, pl.* 1; S. Reinach, *Rep. d. peint.*, p. 235, 2; A. Piganiol, *Recherches sur les Jeux Romains,* 1923, p. 44ff.; M. Rostovtzeff, *A History of the Ancient World,* vol. II, pl. LVII, p. 267, 1927. In the Etruscan paintings and bas-reliefs death is sometimes represented in the form of a wedding to the god of death, C. C. van Essen, *l. l.*, p. 39.

20) The helmet bears the number 5672 in the Museum of Naples. I found it mentioned in H. v. Rohden, *Architektonische römische Tonreliefs der Kaiserzeit,* p. 58.

21) M. Rostovtzeff, Une tablette Thraco-Mithriaque du Louvre, *Mém. de l'Ac. d. Inscr.* 13, 1923, pl. II, 2 and pl. III, 3.

Chapter III

1) It is unnecessary to cite in this connection the well known treatises on Roman religion of the early imperial time such as the books of Wissowa, Toutain, Cumont and the like (see a short bibliography in my *History of the Ancient World,* vol. II, 1927, "Rome", p. 375). I have not seen,

however, any book or essay which is devoted to a careful analysis of the religious tendencies which prevailed *in the city* of Rome in the first two centuries after Christ. I have endeavored to do it for the time of Augustus in my essay "Augustus" in the *Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature*, No. 15, and in *Römische Mittheilungen*, 38-39, 1923-1924, p. 281ff. Of course Rome was the capital of the world at that time and thus all the religious currents of the Roman Empire were represented here. However, it would be very interesting to investigate the material bearing on the city of Rome separately since Rome had her own peculiar religious life not comparable to the religious life of the other great cities of the Roman Empire, everyone of which had her own past and therefore her own peculiarities as regards religion and cult.

2) The paintings and stucco decorations of the Farnesina house and a good report on the excavation of the house may be found in Lessing-Mau, *Wand- und Deckenschmuck eines römischen Hauses aus der Zeit des Augustus*, and in *Monumenti Antichi*, XI, tav. 44-48; XII, tav. 5-8 and 17-34; suppl. tav. 32-36. Cf. A. Mau, *Ann. d. Inst.*, 1882, p. 301ff.; 1884, p. 307ff.; 1885, p. 302ff.; E. L. Wadsworth, "Stucco reliefs of the

First and Second Centuries still extant in Rome", *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, vol. IV, 1924, pls. Iff.; R. Paribeni, *Terme Diocleziane e il Museo Nazionale Romano*, 4 ed., 1922: stuccoes, p. 186ff., Nos. 451-456; paintings, Nos. 692, 720-723 (corridor with the small pictures), 725, 731, 734-739, 741-743, cf. No. 486.

3) H. von Rohden und H. Winnefeld, *Die Antiken Terrakotten*, vol. IV, 1, "Architektonische Römische Tonreliefs der Kaiserzeit", 1911. The Eleusinian plaques are here treated on page 7ff. and reproduced on plates XLV and XLVI. I am not so sure that the plaque which is explained by von Rohden as representing an Eleusinian purification sacrifice must be regarded as purely Eleusinian: it might be Eleusinian-Dionysiac. The plaques which represent various rites of the Bacchic mysteries are discussed and reproduced by von Rohden on p. 52ff. and p. 56ff. and the corresponding plates. On p. 58 von Rohden says: "Hermenschmuckung und Weihe sind vielleicht ursprünglich Teile eines längeren Frieses gewesen der die Schilderung bakchischer Erziehung und bakchischen Lebens zum Gegenstand hatte", and this must be extended to the other plaques representing ritual acts of the Bacchic mysteries.

4) On the "basilica" of the Porta Maggiore see the brilliant book of J. Carcopino, *Études Romaines. La Basilique Pythagoricienne de la Porte Majeure*, 1927. Cf. J. Hubaux, "Ovidiana", I, "Ovide et Sappho", in *Musée Belge*, 30, 1926, p. 197ff. In my interpretation of the decoration of the basilica I follow (with slight modifications) Carcopino.

5) The sarcophagus of Torre Nuova: G. E. Rizzo, *Röm. Mitth.*, 25, 1910, p. 89ff. Note that the sarcophagus was that of a young boy who had been probably initiated into the mysteries of Eleusis. In his memoir Rizzo gives an excellent collection of other monuments of Rome related to the Eleusinian mysteries.

6) The inscription of Agripinilla: F. Cumont, in *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, 1927, p. 1ff. I cannot enumerate here all the titles which the dignitaries and the members of this Bacchic thiasos bore. Note that at the head of the list stands the ἥρως and among the members there are "Sileni" and a "Silenocosmos".

7) F. Cumont, *After-life in Roman Paganism*, 1922.

8) The graves of the Via Latina: E. L. Wadsworth, "Stucco reliefs of the First and Second

Centuries still extant in Rome", in *Mem. of the Am. Ac. in Rome*, vol. IV, 1924, p. 69ff., with bibliography.

9) The pictures of the villa Pamfilj: E. Samter, in *Röm. Mitth.*, 8, 1893, p. 105ff.; R. Eisler, *Orphisch-Dionysische Mysteriengedanken in der Christlichen Antike*, 1925, p. 173ff.

10) The grave of the Nasonii: A. Michaelis, *Jahrb. d. D. Arch. Inst.*, 25, 1910, p. 101ff.; G. Rodenwaldt, *Röm. Mitth.*, 32, 1917, p. 1ff.; R. Eisler, *Orphisch-Dionysische Mysteriengedanken in der Christlichen Antike*, 1925, p. 159ff., pls. X-XII.

11) The Eleusinian grave of the via Triumphalis: G. Bendinelli, in *Not. d. Sc.*, 1922, p. 433ff.; cf. K. Lehmann-Hartleben, *Archaeologischer Anzeiger* (Jahrb. d. D. Arch. Inst.), 1926, p. 106ff. It is known that children were initiated into mysteries both Eleusinian and Bacchic and were supposed to go if initiated after their death straight to the Elysian fields: F. Cumont, *After-life in Roman Paganism*, 1922, p. 138ff.; cf. E. G. Rizzo's article quoted in note 5.

12) Grave of Vincentius and of his wife Vibia: R. Garrucci, *Storia dell'arte Cristiana*, vol. VI, p. 17ff., tav. 493, 494; G. Wilpert, *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms*, Taf. 132, 133; E. Maass,

Orpheus, p. 207ff.; P. Wendland, *Die Hellenistisch-römische Kultur*, 1912, p. 425ff.

13) A good repertory of Orphic and Dionysiac motives which have been incorporated into the symbolical language of the early Christian art has been recently given by R. Eisler, "Orphisch-Dionysische Mysteriengedanken in der Christlichen Antike", *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg*, II, 1925.

14) On the decoration of the early Christian graves of S. Sebastiano: G. Mancini, in *Not. d. Sc.*, 1923, p. 3ff.; O. Marucchi, *ibid.*, p. 80ff.; K. Lehmann-Hartleben, *Arch. Anz.*, 1926, p. 89ff.; E. L. Wadsworth, *l. l.*, p. 64ff.

15) The Mausolaeum and the common grave of the viale Manzoni: G. Bendinelli, "Il monumento sepolcrale degli Aureli al viale Manzoni in Roma", *Monumenti Antichi dell'Acc. dei Lincei*, 28, 1923, p. 289ff.; G. Wilpert, "Le pitture dell' Ipogeo di Aurelio Felicissimo presso il viale Manzoni in Roma", *Mem. della Pontificia Accad. Rom. in Archeologia*, II, 1924; M. Rostovtzeff, *Mém. pres. par divers savants à l'Académie des Inscr. et Belles Lettres*, 13, 1923, p. 10ff., pl. VI; K. Lehmann-Hartleben, *Arch. Anz.*, 1926, p. 97ff. Compare the frescoes of another Christian grave with almost purely pagan decoration in the via

Salaria: K. Lehmann-Hartleben, *l. l.*, p. 97ff.; R. Paribeni, *Not. d. Sc.*, 1923, p. 380ff.; R. Paribeni e G. Wilpert, *Atti della Pontificia Acc. Rom. in Archeologia, Rendiconti*, 2, 1923/4, p. 45ff.; p. 57ff.

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